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e Semiotics of Dress in Asian American Literature

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January Yee Hiong Lim ©

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Abstract

This dissertation is an interdisciplinary investigation into the mutually constitutive relationship between dress signifiers and Asian American identities in Asian American literature in the 1990s. It extends Roland Barthes' concept of "written clothing" and draws on insights of fashion theories to unpack the representations of identities within dress signifiers and to contextualize them within larger discursive structures and embodied practices. The dissertation reads Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* (1990), Mavis Hara's "Carnival Queen" (1991), and Chay Yew's *A Language of Their Own* (1994) and *A Beautiful Country* (1998) in order to argue that there is no grand narrative of progress, or a totalizing Asian American history, but diverse narratives and affective experiences refracting Asian American negotiation of and resistance to the embedded meanings of race in the construction of national identity and the U.S. nation. These literary texts turn to a network of dress references to remember Asian American immigration history, U.S. imperialist interests in Southeast Asia, and their resulting taxonomy of identities. This study suggests that the relationship between the Asian American body and dress these texts describe functions as an archive of memory as well as a resource to understand and trace the historical and demographic shifts in U.S. society in the 1990s. In this sense, these texts not only interrogate the management of national identity and the discourse of hygiene within and beyond the spatial borders of the U.S., but they also raise the matter of connective histories that interlink mainland U.S. to Hawaii and countries in Southeast Asia such as the Philippines.

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Introduction: Dress, Fashion Theory, and Asian American Literature

In the frontispiece of *The Language of Clothes*, Alison Lurie inserts W. Miller's drawing of a man in a T-shirt with "I WEAR THIS THEREFORE I AM" printed on the front.[1] Drawing attention to dress as undergirding self-fashioning, Miller's print raises the question, what does it mean to try to attain an ideal embodiment of identity through clothes? In turn, my project asks, what is the advantage of drawing together the field of dress and fashion theory with Asian American literary studies? One effect of such an inquiry is to show the ways in which material practices of the everyday can generate debate and discussion about Asian American subject formation as well as the adequacy of Asian American itself as a category or identity. Initially a category for the government to allocate economic and political resources in the 1960s, "Asian American" became a familiar term by 1976. Yet, the pervasive racial discourse around Asian bodies, the internal diversity of Asian America, and the varied material conditions of Asian Americans' lives today need to be considered in the context of a larger past that includes imperialism over there and U.S. legislation out here. What grounds Asian American critics' emphasis on the heterogeneity within Asian America, as well as disidentification among Asian American ethnic communities, is not simply that Asian America comprises diverse ethnic communities with multiple differences, but also the historical racial discourse of Asian bodies in the U.S. that continues to view them as essentially the same. Without the homogenizing racial discourse of Asian bodies and a dominant conception of a monolithic, essentialist Asian America, Asian American critics might not have to belabour the point of difference and heterogeneity within Asian American community. Sandra Weber and Claudia Mitchell provide a useful means of entry into dress as tool to comprehending the past in their account of what they call "memory prompts" (256). They write: "Some people seem to remember events in greater detail when they begin with sartorial details, and tell more compelling stories when they stop to attend to clothes" (256). Given this conception, I would argue that "clothing memory" has the potential to address the complexity of Asian American interests and needs, as well as reimagine the question of identities now and for the future (257). Clothing memory and the past it invokes are important because they are also "narratives of resistance, submission, intergenerational conflict, weakness, pain, loss, power, and empowerment" (267). In what ways and to what ends do clothing memory and dress narratives complicate the negotiation that Asian American communities undertake to distinguish themselves from one another and dismantle misrecognized Asian American bodies? It is in light of the diversity and internal heterogeneity of Asian America that I want to use clothing as a means of exploring the ways in which Asian American communities and individuals of different classes within these communities negotiate their positions in Asian America and beyond U.S. borders.

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[1] The drawing originally appeared in *The New Yorker Magazine* on May 22, 1978 (Lurie 267).

This study presupposes that dress practices frame and are framed by historical moments, and explores the ways in which characters in Asian American texts re-present Asian American identities by covering or embellishing their bodies or by dressing against the grain in relation to race and sartorial discourses at particular moments in order to complicate representations of Asian Americans and foreground Asian Americans as active agents in the production of identities. I take my cue from Roland Barthes, who took fashion literature seriously and analyzed the "written language of Fashion" in fashion magazines from 1957 to 1963 (11). In "History and Sociology of Clothing," Barthes argues that both dress and language are "a system and a history" (8). "An article of clothing may seem to be 'meaningless' in itself," Barthes writes, "so we must then, more than ever, get at its social and global function, and above all its history; because the manner in which vestimentary values are presented (forms, colours, tailoring, etc.) can very well depend on internal history of the system" (14). Barthes's emphasis on the connection between dress and its historio-social functions offers a productive way of extending his notion of "written clothing" to reading Asian American literature (*Fashion System* 18). I will examine how Asian American literature uses written clothing as a theoretical, critical, mnemonic, and narrative device to attend to questions of racial identity as a condition of belonging and/or not belonging. In my project, I will consider how Asian American writings are grounded in developing a critical and constructive view of Asian American subjectivity and the establishment of cross-cultural affiliations. As Weber and Mitchell write in their theorizing of "memory work and dress stories," "the object of critical memory work is to make the past usable—a remembering in the service of future action" (256).

My study is an interdisciplinary investigation into the mutually constitutive relationship between dress signifiers and Asian American identities in Asian American literature. While I analyze the connections between dress and language, I do not mean to draw a direct equivalence between fashion and verbal communication. Writing that the application of verbal language to fashion is "carried to extremes" in Lurie's *The Language of Dress* (1981), Joanne Entwistle cautions her readers of the difficulty of reading the precise meanings of fashion and dress.[2] The "real power" of clothes, Entwistle asserts, "comes from their ability to suggest, evoke and resist a fixed meaning" (67). This study thus does not aim to uncover the true identities beneath dress practices, but rather sets out to explore the language of dress in order to trace a network of identity negotiations across the histories of Asian America. I also use the energies of fashion theories to unpack the representations of identities within dress signifiers and to contextualize them within larger discursive structures and embodied practices. To this end, I examine Asian American texts that seek not only to bring a critical awareness of the materiality of the Asian American body to readers, but also to reimagine forms of ethnic and national identification as a way to both remember the past and think of creating opportunities of intercultural connection. I argue that the lived concerns of Asian Americans are given articulation within these Asian American texts through dress signifiers.

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[2] Writing in the introduction to the 2000 edition of *The Language of Clothes*, Lurie notes that "a costume, like a sentence, can mean more than one thing at a time" (xiv).

By focusing on selected works by Jessica Hagedorn, Mavis Hara, and Chay Yew, writers I have chosen precisely for their complex narrative response to the persistent hegemonic representation of a Europeanized American national identity and for their refusal to offer a teleological closure to their characters' sartorial ambivalence and struggles, I identify dress as instrumental to remembering the connection between race and categories of identity such as gender, sexuality, and nationality. In my analysis of these Asian American texts published in the 1990s, I locate the theme of identity transformation—of identification and disidentification as effects of educating, disciplining, and policing the subject—that authors use to bring to the fore the complex interplay between Asian American identification with mimetic ideals and political intervention into U.S.'s regulation of Asian America through the varied construction of racial meanings. Specifically, this study focuses on Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* (1990), Mavis Hara's "Carnival Queen" (1991), and Chay Yew's *A Language of Their Own* (1994) and *A Beautiful Country* (1998) in order to connect these works that mobilize dress signifiers as a representational tactic with the performativity of American ideality as a good citizenry process. In these texts, there is no grand narrative of progress, or a totalizing Asian American history, but diverse narratives refracting Asian American negotiation of and resistance to the embedded meanings of race in the construction of national identity and the U.S. nation, as well as the lexicon defining Asian Americans as the racial Other still powerful in the 1990s despite the "promise" of heterogeneity.

Before sketching the contours of Asian American studies and mapping briefly the trajectory of my inquiry as contributing to the study of Asian American literature, I want to explore for a moment the ways in which the narrative aspect of dress can be investigated, that is, the interdisciplinary approaches that I draw on and modify to help interpret how dress constitutes a necessary and crucial element in Asian American narratives. I suggest that Hagedorn, Hara, and Yew invest their narrators with political potential to subvert the kinds of subjection that technologies of representation entail, pulling documents and stories together and intervening into the espousal of "truth" in official narratives. In "Narrative," J. Hillis Miller posits that narratives can function as "makers" and "policemen" of a culture, as well as critics of the "reigning assumptions of a given culture" (69). While I would not go so far as to concur with Miller that "the imaginary world" of narratives is "a relatively safe or innocuous place" to experiment with cultural criticism, I would argue that narrators in Hagedorn's, Hara's, and Yew's texts tell stories about the possibilities of dress, as well as call into question the embodiment of identities and panopticist power to discipline and punish subject formation (69). In my study, I will examine how these texts use sartorial narrative as a tactic to open up the strong connection between race and the larger history of Asian American engagement with questions of identity and national and communal belonging.

First, a recurring theme in the narratives of these three writers is whiteness and a standard of beauty that scripts a national citizen-ideal, an ideal that legitimates and inferiorizes the racialized Other. As evident in *Dogeaters*, the notion of origin is undermined and problematized. Second, Hagedorn, Hara, and Yew highlight how the nation writes its people into an official narrative and how it stitches them onto the fabric of national history. These writers show that when the narrators articulate a desire for a certain dress design, this is a politically-charged desire that is informed by narratives of representation, as well as the apparatuses of education, tradition, and social convention. Third, these texts call attention to how dress is deployed in the performative aspects of nation as narration. In "Dissemination: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation," Homi K. Bhabha argues: "In the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative" (145). These authors, nevertheless, go beyond laying bare the performative aspects of dress in beauty contests and in high society, which are inventions of tradition, by registering the notion of embodiment as a situated bodily practice, that is, the characters' complicitous awareness of strategic positioning and the attendant material benefits and pleasure that dress provides. In these texts, the performative is both a repetitious, recursive strategy designed to secure official narratives of citizenship and the nation, and a tool of intervention and subversion for the resistant subject.

My study does not concentrate on an exhaustive elucidation of each dress description found in these Asian American texts. Where I do explore specific dress signification, I seek to bring into focus particular narratives that turn to a network of dress references to remember and rethink Asian American immigration history, U.S. imperialist interests in Southeast Asia, and their resulting taxonomy of identities. This interdisciplinary project seeks to build on the body of Asian Americanist scholarship that pushes beyond the geographic borders of the U.S. nation and mainland. In its emphasis on issues of colonialism and imperialism, globalization, histories of immigration, and transnational cultural forces and economic ties that structure the workings of race, gender, class, and sexuality, this inquiry takes seriously the articulation of dress and ideal American national identity in Asian American writing in order to examine the ways in which literary works interrogate and problematize prevailing categories of identity and nationalistic ideals. In the realm of racial difference, the imperatives for instilling enlightened civilizing ideals also serve to perpetuate further discrimination in both colonial and contemporary Asian America. Consequently, I move beyond the U.S.-centred and Us/Them paradigms to insist that what is "out there" is always already "over here." This study is not simply concerned with how U.S. rule, neo-colonialism, and the cultural logic of late capitalism have nourished a longing for dress civility and consumption, and how politics and hierarchies of class exert pressure on characters to maintain the requisite social image or emulate idealized identities. Rather, I am also interested in how these texts unfold the systemic production of knowledge, and the interdependencies of U.S. and other countries in the Pacific. By engaging in critical close readings of dress signifiers in Asian American texts, I offer analyses of the identities actively set in motion by representational tactics of dress. I press for thinking through disciplinary forms of sartorial practice and their interface with tactics of political and social control over Asian America.

My project takes its inspiration from Dorinne Kondo's *About Face*, a work that "argues for theatre and performance as sites for political intervention and the articulation of new kinds of political identities" (22). Kondo further writes: "these political subjectivities should be mobilized in ways that enable us to work in alliance for social transformation" (22). My analysis of Hagedorn's, Hara's, and Yew's texts likewise emphasizes the importance of collaboration and political alliances across race and class, but also examines impediments to and the potential limits of such alliances. To interrogate the interweaving of a conflicted narration of Asian American identities and the representational logic at work in these Asian American texts, I draw on a range of theoretical approaches such as Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital, Michel Foucault's formulation of networks of panopticist power and refiguring traces of resistance, Judith Butler's theory of the body and performativity that is linked to a hierarchical taxonomy of meanings, and Roland Barthes' concept of written clothing as an articulate language. In *The Fashion System*, Barthes embarks on a semiotic analysis of fashion magazines with the premise that "the real garment can only be *transformed* into 'representation'" by using "elliptical *shifters*," that is, the magazine uses written description to "persuade us that it is in Fashion" (6, 7). For Barthes, written description of dress "conveys a choice and imposes it," rendering significant details "behind the jumbled or incomplete appearance of the visible forms" (13, 14). In this, I use Barthes's theoretical analysis to attend to the link imparts how to wear clothing and what to wear in particular social contexts. Whereas Barthes focuses only on descriptions of women's clothing in fashion magazines, I broaden the sense of the term "dress" to encompass several meanings and contemporary trends and to foreground the elements of desire in the articulation of racial, class, gender, national, and sexual identities, so that I consider clothing; costume; body adornment, enhancement, or modification; makeup; perfume; and skincare products. My study of dress signifiers in Asian American narratives thus seeks to extend the reach of Barthes's inquiry both in terms of focus and location, placing emphasis on how textually effective and sartorially complex dress descriptions turn out to be.

According to Seamus Deane, nationalism "asserts its presence and identity through precisely those categories that had denied them—through race, essence, destiny, language, history—merely adapting these categories to its own purposes" (360). In its imperialist strategy of a "universal civilization," Deane writes, "the American empire combines the discourses of moral and material improvement" (359). Yet, it is precisely such enlightened discourses of modernity, discourses that boiled down to "narcissism and idealization," that assigned the other culture a socially inferior status (359). The most interesting aspect of Deane's theory is its account of how nationalism incorporates "class and gender divisions" as part of the requisites of "civilization" (360). I would say that dress functions as a site in trajectory, from primitivism to civility and liberation, Hagedorn, Hara, and Yew trouble the narrative of modern civilization and putative progress toward a nation state free from oppression and violence.

U.S. imperialism and, by extension, nationalism are interlocked with a history of American instructional programs in hygiene, dress habits and moral uplift, a history of civilizing mission and of inclusion and exclusion that extends beyond the borders of the U.S. Excavating the ways in which these texts articulate the education and regularization of personal cleanliness and dress habits against the racialized social fabric of a dominant ideal, I argue that dress signifiers and habits inevitably permeate the narratives when attention to dress and good grooming lie at the heart of U.S. imperialism and constructions of ideal American citizenship. By contextualizing Asian American texts and drawing from a range of racial discourses, I argue both for a historically sensitive theoretical investigation and a critical rethinking of the complexity and resonance of sartorial investment and practices. Rather than simply pointing out the acts of resistance found in Asian American texts, I argue that Asian American writings not only engage the historical and cultural moment, they also gesture to nuances of complicity and critical intervention, to the symbolic and economic capital that is embedded in particular kinds of dressed identities such as the model minority.

Radhakrishnan posits that "there is a relationship of historical continuity, however problematic, between colonialism and nationalism and between nationalism and its significant Other, the diaspora," an assertion pertinent to unpacking the promise of citizenship and nation based on the particular narrative of universal emancipation through American tutelage (159). Such continuity is traceable to Southeast Asian nation states' economic and military dependence on and relations with America, and its concomitant material constraints, unequal economic, political, and social opportunity, conspicuous consumption and privilege, élitist transnational mobility, and locutionary difference that Hagedorn, Hara, and Yew insistently critique and render explicit. In this sense, I also treat dress in these texts as a narrative hinge that allows Hagedorn, Hara, and Yew to crystallize issues of identity, an emotional sense of belonging, and transnational consciousness and crossing. In speaking of how migration can "traumatize national identity," Ann Cvetkovich, in her focus on queer diasporas, argues for an inclusion of the "individual story to open up new vantage points on national and transnational experience" (123). Cvetkovich's emphasis on taking seriously the feelings of hope and disappointments in stories that constitute an "archive of feeling" is relevant to my interest in affect bridging the privilege of belonging and the oppression of not belonging in Hagedorn's, Hara's, and Yew's texts (124). In particular, Hagedorn's, Hara's, and Yew's texts make legible the sartorial excess contingencies of the everyday.

d labour the characters put into and

citizenship and belonging. Embedded in Hagedorn's, Hara's, and Yew's writings is a conflictual identification of characters with whiteness that I seek to situate in a broader historical context. As I will argue, Hara's and Yew's narratives share similar black aesthetic and civil rights movement values in their remembering of history and conscious participation in cross-racial affiliation to combat racial inequality.

Genealogy of Asian American Studies

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, activists, who were spurred by the Civil Rights movement and the Black Power movement that followed it, founded Asian American studies.[3] Through ethnic studies programs at major universities in the U.S. at that historical juncture, Asian American cultural criticism emerged as a site of intellectual debate. Given the post-1965 immigration reform, Asian American studies has reflected the pressure of responding to changes in Asian American cultural production and population demographics by modifying its theoretical assumptions and by opening up spaces for critical dialogue. Pivotal to the support of Ethnic Studies and the Asian American Movement in the late 1960s and 1970s has been *Amerasia*, a multidisciplinary journal founded by two Yale seniors in 1971: Lowell Chun-Hoon, the editor, and Don T. Nakanishi, the publisher. While Chun-Hoon managed to raise money to publish the inaugural issue of *Amerasia* in early 1971, he and Nakanishi sought co-sponsorship of the journal from the UCLA Asian American Studies Centre, a research and teaching centre founded in 1969. The founders of *Amerasia* and Asian American activists were fuelled by the civil rights and black nationalist movements, the protest against the Vietnam War, the 1968 San Francisco State Strike, and, beyond the domestic concerns of America, the Cultural Revolution in China (1966). *Amerasia*'s editorial position on the subject of Asian American community activism is indicative of the cultural and intellectual excitement and energy at work in the late 1960s through the 1980s in Asian American studies. It was no surprise, given the transformative objectives of the journal, that the articles in its early issues dealt with elucidating consciousness, fighting against authority within the university to establish Asian American studies as a field, emphasizing resistance against the very condition of racial stereotyping, and contesting strictures on Asian Americans' freedom of citizenship and political participation.

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[3] Recent scholarship has argued for a conception of the "long Civil Rights Movement" in response to the tendency of historiographies of this era to reify civil rights and demonize or dismiss as failure black power. See, for example, the work of Robert O. Self, "The Black Panther Party and the Long Civil Rights Era, 1935-1975," *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement*, ed. Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2006): 15 – 58, and Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 91.4 (Mar. 2005): 1233 – 1263. Such a reconceptualization argues for the roots of civil rights in the 1930s rise and fall of the New Deal, extending to the 1960s and 1970s.

In 2001, remembering the histories of Asian America and reflecting on contemporary Asian American scholarship and *Amerasia* itself, Russell Leong re-evaluates the question of embodiment and the Asian body by reconsidering how characters in Asian American texts negotiate differences such as race, class, gender, and sexuality and how they are defined by their interactions with the interimplications of identity categories. For, as Leong puts it in his critical scrutiny of Asian American studies,

> No longer is Asian American studies merely the "crossing" of the Pacific from the ancestral country or nation to the continental Americas—a one-way stream that excludes the island nations of the Pacific. No longer is Asian studies the study of Asia—without accounting for the global migration, settlement, and intermarriage of immigrants, and the circulatory paths of its people, ideas, cultures, capital, and technologies (64).

Specifically, he calls for new approaches to academic inquiry into Asian American texts that are materially grounded and embodied, as the field of Asian American studies continues to evolve. A year later, in his discussion of the "internal division of Asian America," Viet Thanh Nguyen notes that "Asian Americans are capable of constructing ethnic hierarchies and practicing discrimination" (30). Nguyen concludes that "Asian America has not advanced as greatly as it has imagined in the past hundred years concerning these ethical choices and political commitments" (31). What scholarly analysis of Asian America most often reveals is the specificities of ethnicity, class, gender, language use, nationality, sexuality, and U.S. citizenship. To the extent that demographic changes in Asian America can be seen as part of the larger contexts of diasporic mobility, migration history, labour, and transnational capital, these global movements also call into question the meanings of "the" Asian American community and concepts of Asian American identity. Debates and discussions about conceptualizing critical approaches to and theories addressing Asian America are crucial. My study responds to these calls by reassessing what ideal fabrications of identities entail, particularly in investigating the conflicting and contradictory positions of Asian Americans around issues of complicity in and collaboration with ethnicist and racial violence.

In *Asian American Women and Men: Labor, Laws, and Love*, Yen Le Espiritu notes that between 1988 and 1990, 51.5% of 150,000 professional immigrants to the United States came from Asia. Espiritu adds that after the 1965 Immigration Act, class polarization within Asian America increased sharply. The rate of poverty among Asian Americans went up from 10 percent in 1980 to 18 percent in 1990 (Omatsu 186). Highly educated Asian Americans, including children who benefited from the civil rights struggles of the 1960s, and recent immigrant entrepreneurs found economic and employment opportunities in the United States in the 1990s, whereas many immigrants who came from Southeast Asia after 1978 suffered poverty in the face of unstable employment and poor mental and physical health (65, 72). Within this context, the misimage of Asian America as a model minority obscures the pressures Asian Americans face to fit into the model minority stereotype. Despite the educational and economic achievement of Asian Americans since the 1970s, Asian American scholarship has focused on persistent anti-Asian violence and resentment, such as the 1982 murder of Vincent Chin and the spectre of the Yellow Peril in the form of John

Huang and the 1996 presidential campaign finance scandal.[4] In 1999, the media coverage of the indictment of Wen Ho Lee, a Taiwan-born American research scientist at the Los Alamos Nuclear Laboratory, on nuclear espionage charges further raised the specter of Asian bodies posing a threat to the U.S. imaginary. Huang and Lee are just two prominent instances of a historical, ongoing anti-Chinese sentiment in the late 1990s. But at its core the media attention to the alleged Asian nuclear spy and corruption of U.S. politics remains rooted in the relationship between identity and its appearance and supposed essence. The spectres of the Yellow Peril have been conjured up by the U.S. government, institutional structures, and the media to secure their domination. Bearing in mind that Asian Americans are not a homogenous group, I factor into my discussion the material conditions, class, national origins, and the histories that have created uneven power relations in Asian America, alongside the power and effects of stereotypes like the Yellow Peril and model minority.

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[4] In the campaign finance scandal of 1996, Bob Dole and Ross Perot, with the help of the media such as the *New York Times*, accused Bill Clinton and the Democratic National Committee (DNC) for using John Huang and the "foreign 'Asian connection'" to raise money for the 1996 federal elections. The DNC conducted an internal investigation of the campaign finance improprieties by singling out campaign contributors whose surnames signified a racial and "foreign" identity as a way to distinguish Asian American from Asian donors. After the Clinton victory, the Clinton administration committed itself to "clean money" and distanced themselves from Asian Americans (L. Ling-chi Wang 522). Thomas P. Kim also explains: "Because racialized Asian bodies posed a significant threat to party elites building and maintaining majority party dominance, it was out of the question for Democrats to defend Asian American political interests" (54).

According to Elaine Kim, this ideological hailing of Asian Americans in the 1990s harks back to the 1940s when the appellation "model minority" Asian, "by never challenging white society, at once vindicates that society from the charge of racism" (18). During the height of the civil rights movement, the image of model minority Asian Americans or "middleman minority" was emphatically invoked, when American ethnic minorities, following the lead of African Americans, demanded social equality (177). While the *U.S. News and World Report* (1966) detailed the image of Chinese Americans as a "model minority," it failed to mention the problems of domestic violence, poverty, suicide, and tuberculosis within Chinatown enclaves (178). Influenced by the civil rights movement, young Asian American writers were determined to "claim America" and forge an Asian American identity. In 1974, Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Hsu Wong edited *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* as a "manifesto for a new direction in Asian American culture" (173). Although *Aiiieeeee!* is an Asian American literary anthology, it only included writers of Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese descent, thereby marking that early stage of the field when "Asian American literature" primarily connoted Chinese- and Japanese-American literature.[5] Nevertheless, the collection of writings by fourteen authors laid the groundwork for Asian American literary criticism. Concerned with the emasculation of Asian American men in the US American imaginary, Chin and his editors identified Fu Manchu and Charlie Chan as representational stereotypes and advocated authenticity and American nativity for the formation of Asian American identity. At the time, Chin, Chan, Wong, and members of the Combined Asian Resources Project (CARP) took the initiative to excavate and reprint old, obscure Asian American writings.[6] While the editors of *Aiiieeeee!* called for a resistance against the feminization of Asian men in American literature, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts* (1976) depicted aspects of sexism and misogyny within her own community. By far the most widely known Asian American text, *The Woman Warrior* became a bestseller and won the National Book Critics Circle Award for the best nonfiction in 1976. Since its publication, responses to *The Woman Warrior*'s feminist critique and representations of Chinese and Chinese American culture have ranged from high acclaim to criticism. *The Woman Warrior*'s publication in the mid-70s is a key moment in the development of Asian American literary studies because Kingston articulated issues such as racism, sexism, and violence confronting Asian Americans and, to a large extent, Asian American women. On the heels of Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, several scholarly studies emerged to map the contours of Asian American literature and raise critical issues such as gender, race, sexuality, class and history. As a resource for my study, I turn now to the productive intersections of scholarly work on Asian American literature and Asian American immigration history.

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[5] *Aiiieeeee!* was followed up by *The Big Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature* (1991). While this anthology focuses on Chinese and Japanese American writing, it includes several women authors, including Joy Kogawa and Sui Sin Far.

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[6] Members of CARP recovered the following Asian American texts, now central to the canon, getting them reprinted by University of Washington Press: Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart* (1946; 1973), John Okada's *No-No Boy* (1957; 1976), Louis Chu's *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (1961; 1979), and Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* (1953; 1979) (Kim, *Asian American Literature* 175). Other early works of Asian American literature that CARP helped get published include Bienvenido N. Santos's *Scent of Apples* (1967; 1979) and Toshio Mori's *Yokohama, California* (1949; 1985) and *Woman from Hiroshima* (1978).

The body of feminist and post-structuralist work by Elaine H. Kim, Shirley Geok-lin Lim, Amy Ling, Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, King-kok Cheung, and Lisa Lowe that emerged from 1982 to 1996 offered Asian American criticism that was formative for the field. This body of scholarly work considers diverse Asian American ethnic groups and develops theoretical approaches to understand the histories and diasporic experiences of specific Asian American communities. Kim's *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* (1982) helped define the boundaries of an emerging Asian American literature. In addition to offering critical analyses of Asian American literature written by Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Filipino American authors, Kim's work is a comprehensive compendium that examines stereotypical images of Asians in Anglo-American literature, including pulp fiction and dime novels. Amy Ling's *Between Worlds: Women Writers of Chinese Ancestry* (1990) focuses on Chinese American women writers such as the Eaton sisters and Maxine Hong Kingston. A growing collection of Asian American women's writing in the wake of the civil rights movement and the feminist movements in the 1960s and 1970s demanded critical attention, as these writings illuminated how Asian American women negotiate hierarchical gender relations and articulate Asian American histories. In this sense, Ling's work reflected the broadening of the field of Asian American literature and literary study and asserted the necessity of considering the concerns of Asian American women. Shirley Geok-lin Lim's and Amy Ling's *Reading the Literatures of Asian America* (1992), a collection of critical essays, addressed pressing concerns in Japanese Canadian, Vietnamese American, Hawaii's Asia/Pacific American, and Indian diasporan literature. Sau-ling Cynthia Wong's *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance* (1993) broached the construction of an Asian American textual coalition, double consciousness, and the politics of mobility. At the fundamental level, these studies marked gender identities, mobility, the place of diaspora, and transnational crossing as important concerns within the field of Asian American studies to be explored in the 1990s.

In the mid-1990s, the field drew attention to the historical legislation of immigration and definitions of citizenship as well as U.S. colonization of the Philippines, Hawaii, and Guam, all of which led to the rethinking of heterogeneous Asian American identities. The contours of the field were not only reshaped to include the literatures of South Asia and Southeast Asia; the literatures of the Philippines, Hawaii, and Guam also came under reconsideration in the context of U.S. colonization. Lisa Lowe's *Immigrant Acts* (1996) was especially helpful for its focus on immigration acts and citizenship as vantage points from which to approach Asian American history and literature. In 1996, *Amerasia* published the special issue "Transnationalism, Media, and Asian American Studies" to examine how global and domestic conditions figure in the diaspora debate. In their recent discussion of migration of Asians from Asia as well as people of Asian descent from Africa and Britain to and within the

Americas, Wanni W. Anderson and Robert G. Lee posit that the diverse lived experiences and narratives of Asians in the Americas offer an affective dimension to help illuminate the notion of home, citizenship, nationalism, and diaspora. For Anderson and Lee, it is crucial to ask: "in the creation of the new identity or a new community, what do displaced members maintain, reject, replace, or reinvent to create a new whole?" (12). David Leiwei Li provides further insights into the shift in the field in the twenty-first century: "What was repressed—the transnational and the psychoanalytical—now returns with a vengeance. The new books have come to visit the relationship between the particular and the universal that the term *Asian America(n)* has posed for the fundamental question of political or the domain of the ontological" (605). Registering the issue of "what is 'Asian,' what is 'American,' and what is 'Asian American," Li writes, "the question 'to be' is not so much a question of essence underlying the category per se as it is a question of the social relations and circumstances through which an identity can stake and secure its claims" (603). This is also a fundamental question for my study, in that my consideration of how people negotiate their identity through self-fashioning is informed by an understanding that identity politics are always informed by the past.

In the midst of shifting political and pedagogical terrains, the development of the field from the late 1960s through the 1980s, then, can be characterized as Phase 1, according to Kent A. Ono, in which US citizenship, subjectivity, national identity, and community were key issues. While it is difficult to single out a key concern found in the immense volume of Asian American scholarship published in Phase 2, Ono defines current Asian American scholarship as "a site of tension" and close to "critical mass" (4, 5). One of the benefits of what Ono deems Phase 2 is the added knowledge and hindsight that enables recent work of Asian Americanists to open up pressing questions on the politics of identity in the twenty-first century. In this light, I find historical inquiry an important part of my methodology. Viet Thanh Nguyen has suggested that Asian American identity is currently "both a lifestyle commodity and a market for that commodity" (12). Nguyen cautions that a polarization between assimilated and unassimilated Asian Americans will serve to derail Asian America, throwing it into "crisis" (171). As Nguyen concludes: "It is doubtful that Asian America as a category, a space, or an identity will be adequate in addressing the needs and desires of those 'bad subjects' in a future after multiculturalism" (171). My study owes a great deal to the scholarship that Nguyen and Asian American critics have developed in recent years. If Asian American identity and the idea of shared experience has become the locus of tension, I suggest that it is all the more critical to continue to pursue such work with the complexities Nguyen notes at the fore. I also want to shift what for Nguyen is an inadequate category further in the direction of semiotics of dress as an approach to unpacking the messiness of Asian American identity in Asian American literature.

Unzipped: Reading Asian American Literature through Dress

Much fine work has been done in Asian American studies by scholars who address themes such as cyber-Asian America and Asian American food, music, youth culture, religion, mixed race subjectivity, sexuality, and transnational migrations. But what of written dress as a problematic to Asian American literary studies? There has been relatively little sustained interdisciplinary work on dress and Asian American literature. What critical inquiry does attention to dress and fashion advance and sustain in the study of Asian American literature? It is instructive to take a look first at Jill Medvedow's rhetorical questions about fashion photography: "How often have we heard the question: 'Is fashion art?' Is it serious enough to be shown in museums or galleries; is it important enough to be discussed in the same vein as painting or sculpture?" (4). Medvedow takes on forcefully the question of high art and material commodity, citing how a great level of "anxiety" was created by having the word "fashion" included in the title of an art exhibition or a museum show (4).[7] While Medvedow's discussion focuses on fashion photography, I want to call attention to this ambivalence about the term "fashion," apparently so unfashionable and so much at odds with a traditional view of serious literary scholarship as the dearth of such a focus of inquiry in Asian American studies seems to indicate. In "Film Costume," Gibson writes that it is time to "look at the literature that does exist to date, to attempt some categorization of the texts available, and to ask, where there are omissions, what directions future studies might take" (35). Taking my cue from Gibson, I extend her notion of re-viewing as a way to combine fashion theory and literary criticism in order to rethink the kind of complex semiotics articulated in Asian

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[7] Medvedow refers to the fashion photography exhibitions held at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, Jan. 23 – May 25, 2002, and at the Fotomuseum Winterthur, June 15 – Aug. 18, 2002.

American literature as an intervention in the field. Bearing in mind the recent comments on identity by Li, Nguyen, Ono, Anderson, and Lee, I develop my inquiry on the basis of an awareness that the stakes are high, and suggest that my focus on the role of written clothing in the constructedness of identities in Asian American literature serves as a theoretical approach to rethink and account for the term "Asian American." With diverse Asian ethnic groups redefining the Asian American demographic landscape, the notion of Asian American as a pan-ethnic Asian identity is contested and questioned.[8] Describing how Asian American studies has "increasingly come under attack in the wake of antihumanist and poststructuralist discourses," Tina Chen writes: "Understanding the constructed nature of Asian American identities makes the performative dimensions of such constructions necessary aspects of study" (xvi). I would argue that critical inquiry into Asian American identities is still an unfinished business and that there is much work to be done in advancing critical insights into contradictions around intra-ethnic inequality, mobility, and hegemonic ideals of good citizenship.

Clothing offers a means for Asian Americans to not only "mind their appearance" but to produce identities. "Identity is not the end," Ono remarks, "of the scholarly work; rather, it is one point among many leading to consideration of quite complex issues of community, solidarity, disenfranchisement, and collective action, often in particular history" (9). In this sense, I suggest that engaging in interdisciplinary close readings of dress in Asian American literature not only serves to address the discursive constructions of identity and community, but also keeps alive issues of racism, exclusion, and systemic social inequality, which are relevant to the learning and teaching of Asian American texts in the classroom. Thus I urge an opening of the field to a sartorial approach exploring dress in Asian American narratives in order to further our understanding of how Asian American characters (re)fit within local and national communities. My own contribution finds in written clothing a powerful narrative tool for rethinking seriously the question of fashioning an Asian American identity against and within American racial history. I look to Asian American literature as a site where such matters of dress are most sartorially reflected upon, and I show how Asian American histories and emotional, lived experience are embedded in written clothing through research and analysis of four Asian American texts published in the 1990s, which Richard Corliss calls the decade of "Pacific Overtures" in terms of "films, fiction, and fashion" (par. 1).[9] Dress is the sign, the thread that weaves the Philippines, Hawaii, and mainland U.S. together in my chosen texts published in the 1990s.

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[8] The significant increase in the number of Asian immigrants between 1990 and 1994 was partly attributed to the amnesty program of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, in which three million illegal residents were granted legalized status. Although Latinos comprised the largest beneficiaries of the amnesty program, Chinese, Filipinos, and other Asians also gained permanent resident status. In addition, the Immigration Act of 1990 increased the number of employment-based visas to Asian immigrants in the early 1990s (Jasso and Rosenzweig 333, 336).

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[9] To prove his claim that Asian chic had dawned, Corliss cites Bloomingdale's senior vice president for fashion, Kal Ruttenstein, who says that the "Orient-inspired look might be the important silhouette for the '90s." Ruttenstein envisages seeing Asian fashion "in full force in the spring collections: Oriental shapes like Mao jackets and mandarin-collared dresses luxurious fabrics like Jacquard silks and lightweight brocades" (Corliss, par. 5). What interests me here is the way in which these representations of Asian fabric and dress continue to draw on signifiers of the exotic "Orient," an anachronistic geography rooted in "Oriental mystique."

The 1990s as an Asian American Archive

Perhaps the most significant reason for my selection of texts published in the 1990s is that this period marks off an imaginative space, a cultural moment, in the West around seemingly liberatory, transnational movement and international world trade and exchange. Such assumptions are called into question after the events of September 11. In his reference to the events of September 11, David Palumbo-Liu writes, "American national identity has now been blended with civilizational identity, as the United States tries to rally its allies against terrorism" (138). How does this speak to Hagedorn's, Hara's, and Yew's texts and their engagement with the politics of race in 1990s America? I would suggest that not only do Hagedorn, Hara, and Yew interrogate the notion of American national identity and the discourse of hygiene within and beyond the spatial borders of the U.S. in their texts, but they also raise the matter of connective histories that interlink mainland U.S. to Hawaii and countries in Southeast Asia such as the Philippines. While Palumbo-Liu is making this point about a twenty-first century phenomenon rather than a 1990s one, he highlights "civilizational identity," something which I see as marking the continued relevance of these texts and their critical work to a twenty-first century management of national identity in the U.S. Most importantly, these particular narratives demand a rethinking of the interpellative seductions of the "model minority" as the central civilizational identity for Asian Americans and of the national imagining of the American nation in terms of heteronormativity in the 1990s.

In the 1990s all was not well on the Asian economic front. Following its financial crisis, or "bubble years" of 1985 – 1990, Japan's economy continued to sag with the declining Japanese yen. Between 1993 and 1997, a financial maelstrom was gathering in Southeast Asia. It is perhaps not surprising that the surge of interest in Asian exotic fashion should occur at a time when Japan was in a deep economic malaise.[10] The vogue for *chinoiserie* and the mainstreaming of Asian American literary works[11] in the early 1990s occurred alongside reports of exploitation of surplus labor in garment sweatshops and service industries, the weakening of the Japanese and Southeast Asian economies, which included Southeast Asian currency and financial crises, and, later on, the anti-Chinese turn in the U.S., such as the 1996 "Asian Connection" scandal of President Bill

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[10] In an article entitled "Japan's Memento Mori," Paul Krugman reflects on the stagnation of Japan's economy in the 1990s and the unpopularity of Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori. Krugman writes: "The world's second-largest economy is neither doing well enough to provide villains for a Michael Crichton novel nor badly enough to pose any clear and present danger to prosperity elsewhere" (A27). Statements like this help explain the current fashion for orientalism in the 1990s when Japan appeared less threatening.

[11] Amy Tan became a best-selling author and international literary celebrity with the success of *The Joy Luck Club* (1989). The "Amy Tan Phenomenon" also opened doors for other Asian American writers, whose works were picked up by established publishers. Aside from the rising popularity of Asian chic in the early 1990s, several Asian American texts gained mainstream attention: Gish Jen's *Typical American* (1991), David Wong Louie's *Pangs of Love* (1991), Gus Lee's *China Boy: a Novel* (1991), Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone* (1993), Jessica Hagedorn's edited *Charlie Chan is Dead: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction* (1993), and Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995).

Clinton's reelection campaign I referred to earlier. The volatility of the moment in American perceptions of Asia in which the texts I study emerged will underscore the ways in which Asian America is subject to larger global forces, a local and global political climate, and shifting demographics in the U.S.

The "Yellow chic" that swept across the U.S. through the 1990s included a gamut of East Asian fashion and motifs seen on Asian models, Asian scenesters, and A-list Asian American actors, in Asian American films and fashion magazines. Although Chinese American designers like Vivienne Tam and Han Feng as well as haute-couture designers such as Christian Dior, Helmut Newton, Karl Lagerfeld, John Galliano, Donna Karan and Jean-Paul Gaultier drew inspiration from Asian clothing style and *chinoiserie* costume was all the rage, the power of the European-American fashion industry has remained firmly secured.[12] Describing a record number of films with "Asian themes" screening in theatres, Damon Darlin declares 1993 to be the "Year of the Asian" and provides a reason that was to have such a marked effect on Asian American cinema: "That's partly due to a growing respect for America's Asian population, whose energy and diligence have made them among the most successful immigrant groups" (par. 4). Indeed, three "Asian-themed" films made a splash of color in American theatres in 1993, at the height of Asian chic: *M. Butterfly*, *The Joy Luck Club*, and *The Wedding Banquet*. These films have much in common, particularly the effect of costuming upon how the films were received. First, the central concern of these films is the interrogation of fixed notions of identity. Secondly, a notable feature of these Asian-theme films is the ways in which the costumed characters transmit narratives through their visual, embodied appearance. The *New York Times* headlined this as well: "You are What You Wear: Finding Identity in Clothes."[13] Not only do costumes render the Asian American body in these films visible and attractive to look at, they serve as signifiers of the ways in which identity is managed, marked, and regulated. "It is through the process of minding appearance, at least," as Susan Kaiser puts it, "that the awareness of even having various identities can be consciously or unconsciously explored and evaluated" (97). In this, I press on the centrality of the 1990s to considering identity through the management of appearance.

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[12] As Valerie Steel and John S. Major argue, "Chinoiserie is often assimilated to the generic category of 'ethnic dressing'" (84).

Yet despite a growing literature on fashion and theoretical work on the relationship between dress and the body, there has been little interdisciplinary work on dress and identity in Asian American literature. I suggest that there are intriguing possibilities of probing in depth written clothing in relation to racial melancholia and in ways that address identity negotiations, communal and national belonging, and what Kaiser calls "yearnings and dreams" (98). In "Body Dressing," Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson note that only in the last fifteen years or so has the study of dress and fashion gained legitimacy as a serious academic discipline. Yet, despite this legitimacy, Entwistle and Wilson emphasize the absence of a body of scholarly work addressing the ways in which fashion and dress reveal the "body in culture" (4). What is fascinating about Hagedorn's, Hara's, and Yew's texts is the way in which the relationship between the Asian American body and dress they describe functions as a resource to understand and trace the historical and demographic shifts in U.S. society in the 1990s. As a repeal of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the legislation of 1943 extended naturalization to Chinese persons. What are the implications of the fiftieth anniversary of the 1943 legislation for Asian American literature produced in the 1990s? In addition to taking clothing to be fundamental to the making of Asian American subjectivities, I suggest that written clothing serves as an archive of memory in the sense that it bears traces of Asian American immigration history and reminds us to see through clothes anew.

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[13] The review focuses on Maggie Greenwald's *Little Jo*, Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine*, and David Cronenberg's *M. Butterfly*, three films with characters in drag (James 60).

Chapter one of my study begins with Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* via a brief mapping of the history of American colonialism in the Philippines and goes on to survey the sartorial discourse of the Reagan era in the U.S. America and the Philippines. Through historicizing the importation of U.S. clinical and medical discourses to the Philippines, I trace the imposition of health and hygiene measures in the management of the Philippine body in the early twentieth century, thereby elucidating the representation of dress signifiers in *Dogeaters*. Hagedorn's text shows that such a civilizing pedagogy works as a strategy for maintaining the disparity between civilized American culture and other cultures. Yet one of the legacies of U.S. colonialism in the Philippines is how education exceeds its function as a conversion process predicated on a civilizing imperative and positive social change that is inherently hierarchical and structures the privilege of high society. This is much evident in Hagedorn's characterizations of the upper echelons of government and high society, particularly in her characterization of Imelda Marcos, who are active and collaborative in the ongoing exploitation of Philippine bodies in cheap labour markets worldwide. In order to critique the continual violence that was constitutive of the Marcos dictatorship, it is crucial to retrace the legacies of colonial discipline that loom large beneath the dress signifiers in the narrative. Yet, the narrative also deploys dress as a site of resistance, as a vestimentary form of surviving and opposing the endless brutality of the Marcos government.

Building on the notion that the inculcation of personal cleanliness rituals functions as a prefatory civilizing rhetoric and is central to the embodiment of identities in *Dogeaters*, chapter two explores representations of ideal femininity in Mavis Hara's "Carnival Queen." Whereas *Dogeaters* depicts various characters whose gender and class identities are represented by their taste in dress, which is more often than not too flashy, Mavis Hara's "Carnival Queen," set in 1966 Hawaii, offers experts ready to help high school beauty contestants correct any "defects" in skin tones to fit the requisites of the beauty contest. In elucidating the connections between ideal femininity and representations of Asian Americans, I show that the text underscores the contradictory formulation of the model minority, a label that signals the ideals of citizenship. I also attend to the emphasis upon dress practices as a flexible sartorial strategy in this text to regain a sense of agency, elasticity, and power.

The first part of chapter three critically examines the ongoing tension between language learning and the telos of successful assimilation through dress signifiers in Chay Yew's *A Language of Their Own*. By examining the relationship between assimilation into the model minority, and, by extension, national citizenship, I argue that the play foregrounds the legacy of linguistic colonialism. Although Yew's play is not explicitly concerned with the newest looks in dress and high-fashion brands, any mention made of dress, fashion designers, or Hollywood stars and celebrities in the play raises questions of the interface between dress and sartorial imaginings, so that signs of dress are used to negotiate individual desire and fantasy on the one hand, and demands of national identification on the other. It is in this sense that Yew's play invokes *My Fair Lady*, which portrays the makeover of a dirty, cockney flower girl to a clean, exquisitely-dressed, well-spoken lady. Yew uses dress signs to recast issues of linguistic imaginings, drawing connections between getting the English language right and dressing right. Yet Yew's play also requires us to critically interrogate how Asian America is inflected by questions of transnationality and affective experiences. Yew's use of written clothing in *A Language of Their Own*, a play that dramatizes the characters' struggles with HIV infection and AIDS, serves as a site of intervention for difference in the construction of identity and community, such as understanding the affective bonds among AIDS activists and individuals living with HIV infection, the constructions of AIDS as medical otherness, and the anxieties of contagion and hygienic politics in the mid-1980s. Stuart Hall's insights into difference are useful in a reading of the conception of identity in

Yew's play: Hall extends the implications of the experience of diaspora to posit that places and geographies of difference are transformed into multiple homes ("New Cultures for Old" 206 – 207). Yew's characters find and make homes across differences of identity and community.

The second part of chapter three looks at how Chay Yew's *A Beautiful Country* stages the histories of diasporic crossings and Asian American immigration. As host of the play, the immigrant drag queen Miss Visa represents "a speaking symptom, a language of clothing which is, tacitly, both dress and address" (Garber 356). I analyze how Yew's play constitutes an address and historical rememory of the imbrications of embodiment and legislations on the immigration and citizenship of Asian Americans. *A Beautiful Country* can be read as most centrally linked to *A Language of Their Own* around the themes of the materiality of the body, including the literal, material body of Asian American individual and collective histories and stories. As Sau-ling Cynthia Wong writes, "the idea that an ethnic subject can be liberated into universal humanity through acculturation is but a myth: a full American identity is not something one comes to possess through internal self-alteration, but a position one is or is not authorized to inhabit" (185). Keeping this in mind, I have examined dress in *A Beautiful Country* as the play's device to position the immigrant Asian drag queen Miss Visa as host for a complicated narrative of Asian American immigration history and personal testimonies. What matters here is not fashion per se, but the cross-dressing Visa as a sign of change, of transit, of overlapping and crossing U.S. national borders. Yew's deployment of dress and the cross-dressing Visa is meant to take us to the history of border crossing, and in this case, Asian American immigrants.

This study, then, begins with an analysis of a novel set outside U.S. national borders and closes with a critical discussion of two plays set in the U.S. The central concern of this project is to investigate the ways in which dress is an embodied practice, a material practice that serves as an archive of identities that haunts the U.S. nation and that raises new questions at each historical juncture. Even though clean, white skin is ostensibly an uncomplicated index of fitness, purity, and social status in American national imaginings of community, the urgency and ambivalence of Americanization programs and the anxiety they reveal about the cultivation of ideal, proper citizenship is evident across these Asian American texts. My critical discussion of the concerted reimaging of an ideal citizen-subject that is aligned with whiteness includes rethinking the inception of Asian American studies and its situatedness in both local and global politics. In pursuing a theoretical reading that attends to the contradictions and nuances of dress signifiers in selected Asian American texts, my study emphasizes dress as a situated bodily practice, as an embodiment that is interlinked with political, social, economic and transnational concerns. Such an inquiry requires self-reflexivity and critical attention to the historical specificity of Asian American texts produced in the 1990s, and to their invocation of specific geographical and social milieus.

The aim of my study is not a question of identifying positive representations of Asian Americans progressing toward a teleological future and denouncing negative images. Instead, I work to reassess and reconsider representations of Asian American sartorial identities by theorizing the interimplications of dress signifiers and mechanisms of desire and identification. The deployment of dress signifiers in these narratives points to the ways in which they are inflected by the terms of the model minority and the construction of racial, gender, and class difference. I interrogate the links between ideals of race, gender, and class, the civilizing process, and, by extension, the promotion of commerce in texts that posit the intersection of the local and the global, the national and the transnational. By looking closely at the oftentimes messy process by which Asian American identities are established, scripted, performed, and apprehended in disciplinary institutions like the school and the family, I discuss how these texts often relate their characters' fascination with Euroamerican fashion and taste and, at the same time, address a history of U.S. imperialism. In a sense, the work addressed and explored in this project involves rethinking and revisioning in order to flesh out what the texts can contribute to larger discussions of the past, of the resonance and power of ideality, and of Asian American image and appearance. In her analysis of Asian American plays, Josephine Lee reminds the Asian American theatre community that "the term Asian American, like any other indicator of individual and collective identity, must constantly question its own prejudices, exclusions, and hierarchies, and allow for change" (218). The writings of Hagedorn, Hara, and Yew can be read as addressing what Lee has posited. For them, I would argue, the effects of the movement era in which the term Asian America was born are still with us and its political work in and through that affiliative concept is not finished.

Chapter One

Reading Through Clothes: Dismantling History and Constructions of Identity in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*

Near the end of *Dogeaters*, *Lola* Narcisa draws Rio Gonzaga's attention to the snakeskin in the bamboo grove. Rio says: "I am fascinated by its pale, ghostly texture, the ridges of serpent vertebrae so clearly etched in the abandoned shell it makes me shiver" (239). That the novel evokes the snakeskin at this juncture, not to mention the many and varied references to clothes within its narrative, underscores the politics of skin and the role of dress as instrumental to the signification of identities. According to *The Complete Dictionary of Symbols*, the snake was a "curative" symbol in the ancient world in that it was able to "rejuvenate itself by shedding its own skin" (445). Jessica Hagedorn symbolically links the snakeskin to the material configurations of citizen-subjects in the Philippines in a story drawn from real-life events. I invoke the politics of skin as part of an argument about the novel's concern to render visible the historically produced conditions of and the material contradictions in the formation of citizen subjects. In "Introduction: Toward a Peminist Theory, or Theorizing the Filipina/American Experience," Melinda L. de Jesús points out that "many hegemonic cultural and political forces conspire to transcribe [Filipino Americans] within narratives of amnesia or forgetfulness" (3). To disrupt what Jesús terms "legacies of erasure," Hagedorn uses the snakeskin as a palimpsest in which historical processes and definitions of citizenship have left their material traces on Philippine bodies (3). If "fabric always stands for the skin of the person beneath it," as Alison Lurie points out, then dress might be deployed as the second skin of the characters' bodies, as signifiers of identities (*The Language of Clothes* 232). How do we understand the forces and effects of dress and the articulation of vestimentary desires and practices? How might the semiotics of dress be used to rethink, in particular, processes of embodied social and racial identifications? To what extent can women's dressing practice be understood within the framework of the 1980s and a larger history of an American civilizing mission and media influence in the Philippines, where both are modified and reappropriated? My investigation of clothing as a signifier and its relation to the body, including a discursive nexus that constitutes Americanness, serves as an attempt to think through these questions. I am interested in exploring a range of representations concerned with constructed, performative class and gender identities that circulate through dress as a signifying practice which is activated consciously and reflexively in *Dogeaters*. I will interrogate the different kinds of investment that characters have in dress, and situate the stylization of gendered and classed identities within a multilayered critique of U.S. imperialism and the late-Marcos dictatorship in the 1980s.

Although aspects of beauty pageants, melodrama, nostalgia, postcolonialism, and spectacle in *Dogeaters* have been well considered, comparatively little attention has been given to what Roland Barthes refers to as "written clothing" (*The Fashion System* 17). In his discussion of fashion text, Barthes articulates the notion of its "authoritative voice of someone who knows all there is behind the jumbled or incomplete appearance of the visible forms;

thus, it constitutes a technique of opening the invisible" (14). While Barthes's analysis of fashion centres on magazines, his formulation of clothing as sign resonates with *Dogeaters*'s vestimentary description. For Barthes, written clothing "is an instrument of structuration; in particular, it permits orienting the perception of the image" (16). Particularly pertinent to my study is Barthes's idea that "described clothing is not entirely general, it remains *chosen*" (16).[1] I will rework Barthes's concept of dress as a sign in analyzing *Dogeaters* as a work that throws into relief the interpenetration of the local and the global, weaves an episodic yarn of the past and the present, and questions the characters' underlying assumptions about their quotidian existence and identities. *Dogeaters*'s narrative investment in dress description is attuned to a complex fabrication of gender and class identities, political and social relations, which are bound up with U.S. presence and powerful economic and military influence in the Philippines. While *Dogeaters* is a work of fiction, it presents characters and events that correspond to the escalating political violence and chaos of the late-Marcos régime, which was operating under the protective aegis of the U.S. The novel points to a civilizing project of fashioning desire and inculcating sensibility that has been the inherent logic of U.S. political involvement in Southeast Asia and the racialization of Philippine culture since 1898. I argue that the American civilizing mission, including the need for redemptive dress decorum, can be understood as a technology of discipline and surveillance, as an apparatus of subject formation. In this way, the Philippine ruling élite is regulated by a pervasive ideal bodily management, even as it perpetuates the systematic exercises of power that it accrues to maintain privilege with all its attendant material benefits. After briefly setting out the theoretical observations of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel de Certeau relevant to tracking the semiotics of dress in *Dogeaters*, I outline the broad historical contexts of colonialism in the Philippines. I will draw upon contemporary debates about beauty contests, consumption, and the mutual constitution of race, gender, and class, but also critically rethink these concerns in their relation to clothes and perfume, which are often glossed over in addressing these issues. To explore dress descriptions via Barthes' notion of signs and reconsider representations of dress across multiple axes of political and social domination, I address the genealogically and historically specific ways in which such social hierarchies operate.[2] Paying close attention to the contradictions and competing investments in signifiers of dress, I will critically examine the specificities of dress integral to the staging of beauty competitions and the commodification of a gendered national identity in which clothing as a visible signifier reinscribes and embodies an exotic, static feminine identity.[3]

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[1] In *The Fashion System*, Barthes undertakes a complicated, monumental project, researched between 1957 and 1963, in which he attempts to deal with multiple structures in the fashion system. Barthes himself admitted that he had several problems to contend with, nor would he deny his "failures" to resolve them in the course of working on the inquiry. The result is a inquiry that "addresses neither clothing nor language but the 'translation,' so to speak, of one into the other, insofar as the former is already a system of signs" (x). In terms of its capacity for understanding how the fashion system belies a network of arbitrary relations and structures of power in which fashion statements transform an artificial sign into "a natural fact or a rational law," Barthes's study is an enabling model (263). What I want to discuss in this chapter is hence not a replication of Barthes's approaches, but rather an extension of his concepts to establish a rigorous study of what is deemed natural and unquestionable and what is ultimately at stake in dress description in *Dogeaters*.

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[2] Arjun Appadurai usefully makes a distinction between "history" and "genealogy": "history leads you outward, to link patterns of changes to increasingly larger universes of interaction; genealogy leads you inward, toward cultural dispositions and styles that might be stubbornly embedded both in local institutions and in the history of local habitus" ("Consumption, Duration, and History" 74).

Bourdieu's theory of symbolic profit in *Distinction* provides an instructive model to consider how signifiers of dress work in *Dogeaters* and how the surplus wardrobe that characterizes Madame might be fleshed out in relation to First Lady Imelda Marcos during the late-Marcos government.[4] In his investigation into how different classes have a vested interest in "self-presentation," Bourdieu posits that "the attention they devote to it, their awareness of the profits it gives and the investment of time, effort, sacrifice and care which they actually put into it are proportionate to the chances of material or symbolic profit they can reasonably expect from it" (202). The investment in signifiers of dress in *Dogeaters* can be understood in the same way: the characters yearn for the attendant material benefits of dressing the body. But most importantly, the novel uses dress to posit the feminist awakening of a beauty queen as not just an awakening of one woman, but also a militant feminist awakening on a national scale. While I draw on Bourdieu's work on the centrality of consumption practices in the maintenance of hierarchical social relationships, I argue that the representations of dress and wardrobe practice point to the reflexive manipulation of dynamic social practices and constitute what Michel de Certeau terms "everyday practices" that are "tactical in character" (*The Practice of Everyday Life* xix). de Certeau also makes a distinction between two forms of action: a strategy is "the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated"; and a tactic "is calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus" (35 – 37). For de Certeau, the logic of tactical actions of the weak "show the extent to which intelligence is inseparable from the everyday struggles and pleasures that it articulates," an understanding that is germane to thinking about subjects imitating clothing designs or the calculated staging of dressed identities in the novel (xx). These representational politics of dress call out for historical contextualization, which can in part be achieved by comparing signifiers of dress in *Dogeaters* with the Gilded Age at the close of the nineteenth century. Before I begin my discussion, I give a brief plot synopsis and then turn to the structure of the novel.

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[3] In taking up the issue of clothing as a signifier of gender identities, I do not mean to suggest that the external clothed body and internal sexual consciousness are necessarily coherent. While the impulse to mobilize signifiers of clothing to survive and cut through the hierarchical logic of layered invisibility is articulated in the novel, I want to complicate the ascription of internal desires to external appearance.

[4] While I appreciate Bourdieu's work in *Distinction*, I want to add that not every social action is relegated to instrumentalization. Needless to say, the class relations and tastes articulated by Bourdieu describe a very precise segment of French society that is the petit bourgeois. The situation of Parisians, of course, is not equivalent to that of the Filipinos in *Dogeaters*. My point is not to posit such an equivalence, but rather to suggest that understanding Bourdieu's work on social actions helps me to reconsider, in a more sophisticated way, the connection between strategic sartorial choices and identities in the novel.

Dogeaters presents neither an overarching plot nor an omniscient narrator. Rather, it interlaces a polyphony of viewpoints from across the social spectrum with factual document and fictional texts. There are at least a dozen plots in the novel, but these are the major storylines: teenage cousins and avid Hollywood fans Rio and Pucha Gonzaga lounge around, watch movies, and gossip; the tempestuous Isabel Alacran works hard at fashioning an idealized femininity and expects the same of her daughter Rosario "Baby" Alacran; Baby Alacran, who suffers from a mysterious skin disease, marries Oswaldo "Pepe" Carreon and becomes the weeping bride; woman of leisure and wealth, Dolores Gonzaga throws parties, gossips with her dressmaker and beautician, leaves her husband Freddie, and settles in America; *Bomba* star Lolita Luna has affairs with patrons, including General Ledesma, and is determined to leave Manila; Romeo Rosales and Trinidad Gamboa meet at the Odeon Theater and become lovers; Joey Sands takes German filmmaker Rainer to see the shower dancers perform a sex show and begins a brief sexual liaison with him; the Manila Film Festival provides a space for gossip about scandals and Madame's dress habits; Daisy Avila joins a beauty contest, but later denounces it and flees to the mountains to become a guerrilla soldier; after Senator Domingo Avila gets assassinated, Colonel Jesus de Jesus kidnaps and tortures Daisy Avila; Madame gives an exclusive and self-revealing interview to an American reporter; while under threats against his life for witnessing the assassination of senator Domingo Avila and running for his life, Joey meets Daisy, who calls herself Aurora, and joins the insurgents; and Pucha continues to live in Manila whereas Rio and her mother have emigrated to the U.S. This is not a novel with a straightforward story line, but rather one that breaks away from a universalizing plot structure and organization, and interweaves various plot lines, as a way to challenge the story of human progress and "reason" underpinning both the colonial administration of the Philippines and the Marcos government.

In "Displacing Borders of Misrecognition: On Jessica Hagedorn's Fictions," E. San Juan Jr. takes issue with Hagedorn's text, noting that its "parodic bricolage of Western high postmodernism" undercuts the force of its satire. My reading moves beyond San Juan Jr.'s notion of "postmodernist art" in *Dogeaters,* which he contends "lends itself easily to consumer liberalism's drive to sublimate everything (dreams, eros, New People's Army, feminism, and anarchist dissent) into an ensemble of self-gratifying spectacles" (128).[5] In a sense, the novel's hybridity is the effect of its narrative structure, which disputes the supposedly hard facts and reason governing official narratives. Different clothing signifiers, voices, and stories interweave to form a multiplicity of layers of life and history, to form what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari term a

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[5] With regard to the problematic dimension of *Dogeaters*' literary technique, I concur with Viet Thanh Nguyen's astute comment on its "flexible strategy" in "Queer Bodies and Subaltern Spectators: Guerrilla Theater, Hollywood Melodrama, and the Filipino (American) Novel": "At the same time, such a strategy, which delights also in a postmodern use of form that fits the novel's exploitation of spectacle and commodity, may participate in postmodernism's tendency to avoid historical complexity and depth" (127). For a discussion of spectacle in the "dynamics of tourism," see Rachel C. Lee, "Transversing Nationalism, Gender, and Sexuality in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters.*" Lee defends Hagedorn's strategy and argues that the novel represents "specularized bodies," such as sex workers, mistresses, and shower dancers, who "take on lives of their own, becoming the privileged perspectives from which multiple stories are narrated" (90). For a recent treatment of representation and spectacle, see Myra Mendible, "Desiring Images: Representation and Spectacle in *Dogeaters*," *Critique* 43.3 (Spring 2002): 289 – 305; and Pamela Thoma, "Of Beauty Pageants and Barbie: Theorizing Consumption in Asian American Transnational Feminism," 17 May 2004 <http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/wyrick/debclass/barbie.htm>

"rhizome," a concept that enables revolutionary interpretive potentials and produces a series of productive connections.[6] Paradoxically, it is those unofficial narratives like gossip, long digressions, and fantastic storytelling that can get the characters back into some semblance of order.[7] Also at work in the novel is the articulation of a continuation of U.S. imperialism that has produced identities and dress practices within transnational connectivities. The visual spectacle of Madame's body—Filipino, feminine, statuesque—characterized by Hagedorn, which I will go on to critically examine, is continually signified through sartorial excess after all.

Dogeaters is marked by an excess of spectacle and what Hagedorn calls "the perverse fantasies of Hollywood," and in doing so, it makes a conceptual shift in thinking about spectacle and the assumptive connection made between race, gender, and class, and the complex, contradictory effects of how and why the characters embody the way they do ("The Exile Within" 48). I will be focusing on dress descriptions, but it is important to keep in mind that other forms of spectacle are still part of Hagedorn's literary strategy to integrate the analysis of the broader questions of both global processes and the lingering effects of U.S. economic and cultural imperialism with the analysis of local processes and staging of dress practices during the Marcos rule. What distinguishes *Dogeaters* from a traditional postmodern strategy of storytelling is its refusal to downplay both the legacy of colonialism from the viewpoint of women and men and the problem of class disparity and hardships that persist in spite of the gaining of Philippine independence. In "Patronage and Pornography: Ideology and Spectatorship in the Early Marcos Years," Vicente L. Rafael asserts from the outset the crucial role Imelda Marcos performed at political rallies in 1965 and 1969, including the ways both Imelda and Ferdinand Marcos "turned their private lives into a public spectacle, staging a stylized version of their intimacy" (284). I cite Rafael's argument not as a corrective to E. San Juan Jr.'s but to shift the discussion to how costumed spectacles work in the novel where discourses about race, gender and class converge. Just as an American audience first encountered the Philippines as a public spectacle and subsequently became consumers of Philippine people as commodified objects, the novel broaches the subject of materializing Philippine bodies which resist containment and domestication in the Philippine as well as the U.S. scene.[8] I will discuss how these spectacles not only position the reader, who observes characters (re)styling a spectacular array of embodied identities, but how they also pose wider implications of gender and clothing practices in the workings of matrices of power, which informed and effected the institutionalization of Filipino women and men as gendered and raced subjects.

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[6] A critical dimension of the multiple narrative details that underwrite the novel is the power of creating new syntheses and relations among disconnected narrative elements; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "Introduction: Rhizome," *A Thousand Plateaus*: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987) 3 – 25.

[7] For a detailed discussion of gossip, see Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1996), in particular 112 – 120.

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[8] It is worth remembering that cultural apparatuses such as museum collections and the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 exhibited representations of the Philippines, as well as Asia, making the so-called primitive people pose for public consumption and entertainment. Many Filipino American women got into America to perform in Philippine booths at World Fairs in the late nineteenth century; see Neil Harris, *Cultural Excursions: Marketing Appetites and Cultural Tastes in Modern America* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990) 111 – 131. In "The Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Saint Louis, 1904: 'The Coronation of Civilization,'" Robert W. Rydell posits that anthropological exhibits, such as the display of Igorot Tribesmen in the Philippines exhibit, helped to justify American domestic policies and heroic foreign aid missions abroad; see *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876 – 1916* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984) 154 – 183. Thinking of the 1893 World Fair

The vignettes in *Dogeaters* describe a sequence of events, including spectacles, mediated through various narrators in interlinguistic registers, during which one of the recurring protagonists, Rio Gonzaga, who emigrates to America and keeps in touch with the city through visits, recalls the stories from her youth in cosmopolitan Manila. Manila in *Dogeaters* is a construct, a part of Rio's own imaginary homeland. The novel may begin with Rio's narration, but it is ultimately the various narrators' stories and omniscient perspectives that serve the role of supplanting the authority and veracity of official truths. As Leonard Casper puts it in "Bangungot and the Philippine Dream in Hagedorn," it should come as no surprise that readers think of the novel as "no more than a random collage of sophisticated *tsismis* (gossip)" (153). Despite the random sequence of events, the characters and fictive episodes, nevertheless, have a familiar ring. Vignettes and sub-vignettes are told in first and third person by several characters such as: Pucha, Rio's older cousin; Dolores Gonzaga, also named Rita Hayworth,

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and the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in relation to the concept of civilizational hierarchy and representation of Philippine people as spectacles, it is possible to read the spectacular mode of representation in *Dogeaters* as an interrogation of the *realpolitik* of American-Philippine relations. In particular, the novel probes into the legacy of colonial fantasies and visuality, that is, the Philippine body as a racial and gender spectacle a century after American colonial administration.

Rio's fashionista mother; Daisy Avila, the daughter of Senator Domingo Avila, a beauty queen turned guerrilla fighter; Isabel Alacran, the beautiful wife of Severo Alacran, owner of the Alacran Corporation; Rosario Baby Alacran, the weeping bride; Joey Sands, the illegitimate son of an African American G.I. and a Filipino prostitute, a disc jockey and a male prostitute; Trinidad Gamboa, a cashier at the Odeon cinema and a salesgirl at the Sportex; Romeo Rosales, Trinidad's boyfriend, handsome young waiter, and an aspiring actor; Lolita Luna, a sultry movie star and mistress of General Ledesma; Rainer, a German filmmaker in love with Joey Sands; Cora Camacho, the host of her TV talkshow, *Girl Talk*; Chiquiting Moreno, a hairdresser; Salvador, a manicurist; Panchito, Dolores's personal dressmaker; and Andres Alacran, the bar owner of CocoRico and Joey's boss. By using the voices of different narrators, Hagedorn is given the flexibility of representing several points of view, commenting on the affairs and scandals of high-powered celebrities, and making observations about Philippine history and politics through her characters.

These stories in different voices, both in first and third person, interweave fact with fiction, her/his story and history, English, Spanish, and Tagalog, dialogue and monologue, and local with global. Casual gossips, for example, are interlaced with fictionalized versions of actual historical events, such as the Manila Film Festival, the Young Miss Philippines annual pageant, and the assassination of Senator Avila.[9] Eschewing linearity and neat endings, Hagedorn fills the novel with epigraphs from Jean Mallat's and José Rizal's writings, episodic viewpoints, dress descriptions, gossips, interviews, letters, magic realism, oneirology, newspaper excerpts, verifiable documents, and Tagalog soap opera.[10] Against the official narratives propounded by Jean Mallat and President William McKinley, characters from all walks of life dish on dress, beauty pageants, Madame, hearsay, movies, and urban legends.[11] Hagedorn uses the

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[9] The beauty pageant is a thinly veiled reference to Miss Universe Contest of 1974 held in Manila, and Senator Avila's assassination a representation of Senator Benigno Aquino, Jr.'s assassination in August 1983 at the Manila International

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Airport. Senator Benigno "Ninoy" Simeón Aquino, Jr. (1932 – 1983) was among the several opposition politicians arrested and imprisoned when the Martial Law was imposed in 1972. The assassination of senator Benigno Aquino, Jr. had political repercussions for the Marcos government, leading to civil uprising against Ferdinand Marcos and his downfall in 1986.

[10] Hagedorn includes citation of and allusion to these textual materials in the novel: Jean Mallat's *Les Philippines* (1846), the *Associated Press*'s "Insect Bounty" (20 September 1988), President William McKinley's 1898 Address to a Delegation of Methodist Churchmen, and a line from José Rizal's unspecified poem. Well-versed in native dialects, French adventurer and ethnographer Jean Mallat published *The Philippines: History, Geography, Customs, Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce of the Spanish Colonies in Oceania* in 1846 (Trans. Pura Santillan-Castrence and Lina S. Castrence, Manila: National Historical Institute, 1983). José Rizal (1861 – 1896) was a prominent nineteenth-century nationalist, martyr, novelist, and poet who advocated non-violent resistance to colonization. See, for instance, the biography written by Bernard Jacob Reines, *A People's Hero: Rizal of the Philippines* (New York: Praeger, 1971). Jacqueline Doyle locates the source of Rizal's line in his anti-colonist novel *Noli Me Tangere*, translated as *The Lost Eden* (1887); see "'A Love Letter to My Motherland': Maternal Discourses in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*" for a discussion of Mallat and Rizal.

[11] Noting that President William McKinley's address to the Methodist congregation is dated 1898 in *Dogeaters*, Victor Bascara writes that the error in the novel's dating the President's 1899 speech is "a strategy for undermining the authority of any one source" (par. 9). I would add that the error is subversive precisely because it is an intervention into the American acquisition of the Philippines in 1898, an imperialism marked by a history of violence, death, and colonial amnesia. Although couching his invocation in Christian terms, McKinley's address and his key speeches are inseparable from his own sense of economic and political urgency. In his 1898 speech, "The Acquisition of the Philippines," for example, McKinley is blunt about how the Philippines would

digressive, imaginative narratives of these characters to situate official truths so as to undermine the security of a stable, absolute truth and to highlight the distortion evident in the way in which the authorities dispense truths. In spite of the abundance of social details from the past, along with non-fictional documents, the novel self-consciously draws attention to its status as fiction. For example, Rio might not be a reliable storyteller, for she is reimagining the past as much as she is telling it. In an evident effort to stake a claim in her own history, Pucha expresses her misgivings about Rio's memory and her version of the past: "Puwede ba? 1956, 1956! Rio, you've got it all wrong. Think about it: 1956 makes no sense. It must have started sometime around 1959, at the very least!" (248). Later, Pucha reminds her cousin: "I just want you to get my damn history straight, Rio—*puwede ba*, it matters to me" (249).

Here I should pause to note several ways to interpret the significance of the late 1950s. First, I read this scene as not only a corrective rendering of a particular period of time in Pucha's life, but also as a rendering of the power that Hollywood and American television have in shaping the characters' consciousness and identities since the 1950s. Carl L. Bankston, III points out that the emergence of television and the consequent ubiquity of American television

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provide "the commercial opportunity" for the transnational movement of goods and corporate capitalism (904 – 908). Featuring McKinley's speech in a most (in)opportune moment, that is, before the next chapter entitled "Heroin," the novel deflates the moralizing force of his address. In addition, the novel's allusions to dream and nightmare run against the grain of McKinley's manifestly beneficent intentions of instituting democracy and education reforms. As much as McKinley would outline a grand vision for securing legitimacy within the Philippines in his address to the Methodist congregation, such a romantic vision is precisely missing in *Dogeaters*. As a "document of civilization," to borrow Walter Benjamin's words, McKinley's speech is "at the same time a document of barbarism" (256).

programming in Filipino homes in the 1950s has enabled Filipinos in the Philippines to feel a "closeness to American culture," even though some remain ambivalent about the U.S. (180). The reference to 1959 becomes even more relevant to the motif of metamorphosis in the chapter "Sleeping Beauty" of the novel (100). Released in 1959, the Disney animated feature *Sleeping Beauty* shows how the character of Sleeping Beauty, or Princess Aurora, falls into a deep sleep for a hundred years, taking the castle into a dream. In the epigraph to Part One of *Dogeaters*, Hagedorn cites an excerpt from Jean Mallat's *The Philippines* (1846): "They have the greatest respect for sleeping persons … They can not abide the idea of waking a sleeping person ..." (1). While the other excerpts from Mallat's "Jungle Chronicle" (41, 117, 210) also characterize the Philippine people as indolent and soporific, the novel juxtaposes his observations with a quote from José Rizal's poem to signal it is time to wake up: "The sleep had lasted for centuries, but one day the thunderbolt struck, and in striking, infused life . . ." (119). Hagedorn emphasizes the importance of political awakening when she deputizes Daisy Avila to denounce Madame and the beauty pageant. As Daisy's character is based on the historical beauty queens who defected to the mountains, she takes on Hagedorn's voice and the tones of narrative authority to assert the cause of social change.[12] When Daisy calls herself Aurora, she evokes Princess Aurora of Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*, including her royal wardrobe of pink or blue dresses, with a twist (232). Hagedorn's Aurora provides a stunning contrast to the received notions of gender in beauty competitions and late-twentieth-century mainstream culture. In contradistinction to the Sleeping Beauty fairytale plotline, in which the prince wakes the princess, Daisy wakes up on her own and experiences an epiphany. In its subversive use of the Sleeping Beauty's character and the appellation "Aurora," the novel suggests that it is time the Philippine people woke up a century after the U.S. occupation in 1898.

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[12] Daisy's character is clearly based on two beauty queens who defected to the mountains and joined the anti-Marcos movement: Nelia Sancho, Miss Philippines and Miss Asia Pacific 1971; and Maita Gomez, Miss Philippines 1968 and runner-up in the Miss World contest (Bacalso; "Asia Travel Guide").

Second, Ferdinand Marcos slowly gained ascendancy in the late 1950s, but it was in 1959 that he became president of the senate. The 1950s and 1960s were also a period of economic "nationalist awakening" that resulted in the "passing of laws aimed at breaking the 'foreign stranglehold' over the Philippine economy" (Caroline S. Hau 134).[13] It was a period in which the Philippines submitted to American policies and, at the same time, grappled with the "heterogeneous elements *within* the Philippine nation-state that ha[d] been excluded or marginalized in the name of the nation" 12). In 1956, the Catholic Church opposed the Senate Bill that would prescribe two of José Rizal's novels as required readings in schools, colleges, and universities.[14] The Rizal Bill was significant in that it formed part of the Philippine nation-building project that relied heavily on literature as an instrument of Philippine nationalism. The mid-to-late 1950s, then, represent not only a formative period for Marcos's political career and ascension to the presidency of the Philippines, a dictatorship that reinforced the continuity of U.S. civic, economic, and political tutelage, but also the contradictions underlying the process of nationalism in the neocolonial Philippines. This is to say that Hagedorn's understanding of the constitution of the Philippine nation-state can be read productively in relation to her concerns about the construction of the "alien" or "foreign" during the U.S. colonial period and postindependence period.

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[13] Taking into account the enactment of nationalization laws, such as the Market Stalls Act of 1946, the Retail Trade Nationalization Act of 1954, and the Corn and Rice Industry Nationalization Act of 1961, Hau analyzes anti-Chinese racialist discourse in literary works, as well as the displacement of Chinese from Philippine history by nationalist historians such as Renato Constantino and Teodoro Agoncillo, in conjunction with the passing of laws against the Chinese during the Philippine economic nationalism of the 1950s and 1960s (133 – 176). Hau further states that the Marcos, Aquino, and Ramos governments persisted in "scapegoating" the Chinese as "personifications of capital" (175). Although this is not my concern here in this chapter, I would like to mention in passing that the association of the Chinese with money and the mercantile class and the anti-Chinese sentiment within Philippine society, and by extension, in postcolonial Southeast Asia, is noted in *Dogeaters*. While the novel demonstrates the way in which the cold-hearted house manager Mr Chen humiliates his employee Romeo Rosales, it shows that feelings of ambivalence are deeply embedded in the characters. Whereas Pucha asserts that she cannot live in Greenhills because there are "[t]oo many Chinese," Rio remarks that it will not matter to her cousin "so long as they're *rich*" (57). Pucha's retort to her cousin's blasé response directs Rio's attention to the grounds of ethnic and class difference: "Rio—even the rich ones contaminate the water with hepatitis!" (57). To this, Rio countered by saying that their great-great-grandmother came from Shanghai, which elicits a gasp of horror from Pucha.

By conveying Pucha's concern about her own history, and, by extension, particular key shifts in the 1950s, Hagedorn calls attention to how discourses of race and their origins can be traced in order to dismantle the notion of a seamless narrative of progress and development. In the eyes of Rio, Pucha is an "overripe cousin," but in the hands of Hagedorn, Pucha's personal history deserves as much attention as the larger canvas of history (5). Not only does the novel gesture to the urgency of waking up and sorting out the muddle, it posits the ways in which history is an ongoing process of clarification and reconstruction as a resistance to the larger narrative of Americanization and the U.S. legitimatization of the Marcos dictatorship. Far from positing a seamless recollection of the past, or approaching the past with teleological certainty, Hagedorn seeks to demonstrate that Rio's narrative of the past is filtered through diasporic consciousness and is geographically and historically situated. Despite the novel's postmodern view of history, a reactivating of Philippine history, particularly of U.S. imperialism and conquest of the Philippines, is central to an understanding of the novel's attempt to articulate the complexities of identities and to subvert the legacy of colonialization through mimicry. Whether in terms of narratology, genre, or gender, *Dogeaters* disrupts every one of these organizing perspectives. Relying on dress descriptions, the novel addresses questions of imitation, re-writing, and re-presentation. It not only makes clear the imbrication of the U.S. and the Philippines through the characters, but it also asserts the indistinguishability of original and imitation, artifice and reality. More importantly, the novel is concerned with the Marcos government and its "play of illusions and phantasms," to borrow Jean Baudrillard's words, and the characters' consumption of images and clothing, at the expense of understanding a sense of history that can help the Filipino characters confront the brutality and injustice of the real in time (204). To that end, the plotlines are about a history of U.S. colonialism and the structures of power that give rise to identities the narrators try to tell through dress signification. While the stories are told from the various characters' point of view, the novel renders these narrators as flawed characters to ensure that we attend to the logic of dress habits that it implies and the historical connections that we excavate to make them fit in with the narratives.

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[14] Teodoro M. Locsin, "The Church under Attack," *The Philippines Free Press Online* 5 May 1956, 24 Aug. 2006 <http://philippinesfreepress.wordpress.com/2006/05/05/the-church-under-attack-may-5-1956/>

American Colonialism

In *The Roosevelt Chronicles*, Nathan Miller notes that Theodore Roosevelt took possession of the Philippines in 1898 by annihilating the Spanish naval forces in Manila.[15] From 1521 to 1898, the Philippines was a Spanish colony, and after the Declaration of Independence in 1898, the Philippines was under the United States colonial administration. Between 1898 and 1906, the United States fought a war against the insurgents, but not until 1946, after the Japanese invasion from 1941 to 1945, did the United States grant the Philippines independence. In "The New Empire's Forgetful and Forgotten Citizens," Oscar V. Campomanes identifies America's annexation of the Philippines as a decidedly long-term military project: United States-controlled Philippine military bases function as

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[15] As Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Theodore Roosevelt was "the living embodiment of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan's equation of trade with "national greatness," and was much influenced by Mahan's 1890 book, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660 – 1783* (Miller 214). Miller writes that entrepreneurs and politicians concurred with Mahan's views that powerful naval bases in the Caribbean and Asia were crucial to the expansionist needs of American capital. Moreover, Mahan asserted that these previously uncharted areas were new markets "where the great surpluses of America's farms and factories could be disposed of at a profit" (214). In order to deflect attention away from his imperial interests, Roosevelt described the heroic role of America and its "intervention" in the Philippines in the terms of Manifest Destiny and democratic reform (*Theodore Roosevelt* 139). To maintain the strength of American power, economic interests, and moral mission in the Pacific, Roosevelt took charge of quelling a series of insurgencies which rose against U.S. rule at the time (Eric Rauchway 36).

"the staging grounds for its crusades and interventions in 'trouble spots' around the globe" (11).[16] Pointing out how William Howard Taft "is gratefully remembered by many Filipinos for enunciating the policy of 'the Philippines for the Filipinos,'" Renato Constantino shows that this policy belies U.S. business control strategies and the Tariff Act of 1902 that expunged the tariff on products imported from the U.S. (*A History of the Philippines* 291, 296).[17] For Taft, American-oriented education squared with U.S. commercial interests, which included the manufacturing sectors seeking to export their products overseas.[18]

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[16] As tension with the Soviet Union was escalating, America began to consider setting up army and naval bases in Japan, Okinawa, Korea, and Guam in 1946. Anxious to keep U.S. troops in the Philippines, President Manuel Roxas signed an agreement in 1947, granting America the 99-year lease on twenty-two sites, together with Clark and Subic.

[17] In citing *A History of the Philippines*, I am not subscribing to linear narratives of histories, but rather I retrace the questions of American administrative apparatuses in the Philippines in an effort to explore the issues of clothing and embodied identities in the novel in relation to all of their multiple and complex historical, political, and social contexts. When Constantino blatantly states, in *Neocolonial Identity and Counter-Consciousness*, "There is no need to touch on the history of the Filipinos during the pre-Spanish and Spanish periods," my argument diverges from his reading of history, which I see as leaving out the complexities and knowledge of Filipino struggles (100).
In "Outlines of a Nonlinear Emplotment of Philippine History," Reynaldo C. Ileto cautions critics against a linear construction of Philippine history. Drawing attention to Renato Constantino's historical text, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited* (1975) and the National Democratic Front (NDF), Ileto criticizes how "they present an image of a pre-Hispanic feudal order bastardized by colonialism and a native culture contaminated by Christianity" (104).

[18] In 1902, William Howard Taft, an Ohio judge, arrived in Manila and moved into Malacañang as the first American civilian Governor-General, then American Secretary of War, and eventually, American President. Up till the end of his rule in 1913, Taft fashioned the contours of Americanizing what he referred to as "our little brown brothers" in the Philippines (Fred Poole and Max Vanzi, *Revolution in the Philippines* 176 – 180). This sense of civilizing tutelage toward the Philippine population is most clearly demonstrated in the arrival of "boatloads of

The first group of six hundred American teachers arrived in Manila in August 1901 via the *Thomas*, after which they were remembered as "Thomasites" (Brands 69). Constantino points out that the free American public school system, "an instrument of pacification" run by American military soldiers and officers, has morphed into "an instrument of assimilation or Americanization" (309).[19]

In "Cacique Democracy in the Philippines," Benedict Anderson uncovers the historical significance of the Filipino ruling élite who benefited financially and politically from both Spanish and American colonialism. Anderson remarks that the U.S. political system effectively enabled the wealthy mestizos to form a "national oligarchy," adding that the mestizos "went to the same receptions, attended the same churches, lived in the same residential areas, shopped in the same fashionable streets, had affairs with each other's wives, and arranged marriages between each other's children" (11). Indeed, Anderson's comments on the way the Filipino political élites partied in a "civilized 'ring'" echoes the

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American schoolteachers" to start an American curriculum using English as a medium of instruction in 1901 (179). To Taft, the terms of American administration and treatment of colonized Filipino peoples are designed to accomplish an important self-serving task. He explained: "The carrying out of the principle, 'the Philippines for the Filipinos' in first promoting the welfare, material, spiritual, and intellectual of the people of these islands is the one course which can create any market here among the people for American goods and American supplies that will make the relation of the United States to the Philippines a profitable one for our merchants and manufacturers" (qtd. in Constantino 292).

[19] Niall O'Brien notes that the U.S. school curriculum had serious repercussions for the Philippine medical system, which was made worse when courses and training in medical schools were geared to prepare doctors and nurses to work in America rather than in the Philippines. He cites that 10,000 Filipino doctors and some 50,000 Filipino nurses were working abroad in the 1980s, when many towns and *barrios* did not have a doctor; see Niall O'Brien, *Revolution From the Heart* (New York: Oxford UP, 1987), 136.

characters in the chapter "High Society" in *Dogeaters* (11). Of this, David C. Kang has said, "Filipino leaders have always been caught between the pull of rewards for accommodating the imperial powers and the desire for independence" (*Crony Capitalism* 26). For example, the first elected president in 1898 had chosen men from the upper echelons of society, a privileged class comprising many who were against independence (Kang 26).[20] The U. S. administration, Kang points out, failed to help forge new strategies of economic and political reform to address social stratification and structures of inequalities. Rather, the American regime set up "a Congress-style bicameral legislature" that was amenable to the "ambitions and social geography of the mestizo *nouveaux riches*" (Anderson 11). By 1934, Constantino writes, "cultural Americanization had produced a ruling elite" who were enamoured of American governmentality and political institutions (340). Just as the "rich intelligentsia" obtained power by an assimilationist incorporation of Spanish practices, these Filipino elites "used their close relations with the United States to preserve their power and privilege" (Kang 27). The U.S. gave substantial aid and protection to post-independence Philippines, but the Bell Trade Act (1946), a free trade agreement that required the Philippines to make concessions to the U.S. allowed American corporations to control the domestic marketplace (Kang 31). Further, as Lynn M. Kwiatkowski and Lois A. West note in "Feminist Struggles for Feminist Nationalism in the

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[20] In his comprehensive and insightful study of cronyism and corruption in South Korea and the Philippines, Kang notes that "Korea and the Philippines are the only countries in Asia to bear an American institutional imprint," citing the example of the American model of presidential systems (23 – 24).

Philippines," before the U.S. granted the Philippines independence, it set up neo-colonial structures such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, to which I will later return (151).

Against such a backdrop of dominating American influence and an American imprint on Philippine institutions, *Dogeaters* offers instructive interpretive possibilities, given that what is at issue is the genealogical roots of securing clothing as a sign of American neo-colonialism and wardrobe consumption. In her analysis of the visual images that U.S. companies used to export their products at the turn into the twentieth century, Mona Domosh contends that advertisements often "associated consumption with the highest 'stage' of the civilizational hierarchy" (535). At the heart of U.S. corporations' turn-of-the-century advertisements is the American Dream and partaking of American culture through consumption. Couched in the language of the "civilizing benefits" of becoming American through the purchase of American commodities, American economic expansion enables and legitimizes its power over people and control over geographical space (547). Domosh argues that the gendered and racialized ideologies and formation of U.S. national identity at the turn of the twentieth century are implicated in contemporary economic imperialism and globalization. Domosh's analysis of American products as symbols of American culture provides a way to understand the possibilities and limitations embedded in the characters' dress consumption. If economic imperialism involves installing needs and desires to be a highly cultivated individual, then the circulation of fashionable items, such as luxury designer clothes and mass-produced designer apparel, is a way in which colonial control and dependency are realized in the Philippines. In the same way that Hagedorn alludes to the Philippine imaginary colonized by Hollywood, so does she interrogate how the American imperial and refashioning mission is predicated on its own economic interests for manufacturing demands. The novel produces histories of resistance through the description and remembering of clothes, an intervention that evinces the contemporaneity of an American colonial administration and its effects on current politics of race and neo-colonialism.[21] Taking up the questions of the ways state apparatuses seek to interpellate and reproduce citizens, the novel shows that U.S. influence still exerts a powerful constitutive force in shaping Philippine bodies, identities, and subject formation. This investigation is especially necessary as part of a critical analysis of late-twentieth-century Asian American literature, when popular culture has become a site for disseminating images and performances of gender, national, racial, and social identities in the contemporary global situation.

Beautiful People[22]

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[21] On the issue of education, I want to stress that though it is important to point out interpellative processes of American pedagogy, I do not mean to inscribe a passive picture of Philippine educators nor an unchanging nature of the Philippine curriculum and materials. See S. Lily Mendoza, *Between the Homeland and the Diaspora: The Politics of Theorizing Filipino and Filipino American Identities*, for a discussion of the education system and of the failure of Marxism "to challenge the hegemonic reign of U.S. epistemic conditioning in Philippine schools" between the late-1960s and mid-1980s (177).

[22] I take this term from Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*. Here, I go beyond Bourdieu's notion of "beautiful people," which refers to "models, photographers,

As Rio Gonzaga, her cousin Pucha Gonzaga, and their chaperon Lorenza sit in the cinema watching *All That Heaven Allows* in 1956, in a scene that marks the beginning of *Dogeaters*, Rio's articulation of Jane Wyman's character is evoked through dress: "Flared skirts, wide cinch belts, prim white blouses, a single strand of delicate, blue-white pearl" (3). As well, both Rio and Pucha are enchanted by Gloria Talbott's "virginal, pastel-pink cashmere cardigan" and by her "casual arrogance," which "seems inherently American, modern, and enviable" (4). The novel's closing pages include Rio's account of her mother Dolores's hosting a farewell party for the American consul and his wife, Howard and Joyce Goldenberg, who are being transferred to Saudi Arabia. At Dolores's invitation, the Goldenbergs join her family and adjourn to the Gonzaga's "imitation Swiss chalet" in Baguio, a mountain resort which, in Pucha's mind, is "the closest thing to America" (236). Rio's recounting of the ways in which she and Pucha "do" gender at the replica Swiss chalet presents a further connection to the novel's opening by returning to the performative dimensions through which gender identities are constituted via visual embodiment:

> We are both eager to show off our pastel orlon cardigan sweaters, which we wear draped over our shoulders, under single strands of tiny pearls. Pucha's pearls aren't real, mine are. No one can tell the difference. We affect the casual teenage glamour of Gloria Talbott in our favorite movie, *All That Heaven Allows*. (236)

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advertising agents, journalists," to observe that, in the context of dress and the cult of Hollywood celebrity that characterized the 1980s, the term includes beauty queens, urban élites, politicians, prestigious designers, movie stars, and socialites (233).

As the passage shows, Pucha's pearls look so real that they pass for the real thing. To that extent, her pearls collapse the distinction between what is genuine and what is counterfeit, a breaking down of binary categories that recurs frequently in the novel. Looking at one of his precious paintings, Amorsolo's "Farmers Harvesting Rice," Severo Alacran, for example, tells an American correspondent that he "can no longer tell what's authentic from what's fake" (21). In the face of such a rupture in systems of distinction, the boundaries that secure identity become increasingly difficult to maintain. Through their dress and affectation of Gloria Talbott, Rio and Pucha intervene in emphasizing how they play on and present their own version of the desired Talbott's glamour, proving that they are capable actresses on every sartorial front. Several paragraphs later, when Rio explains that her short hair is "the rage" in Hollywood, Pucha asks, "And when was the last time you were in Hollywood or Rome?" to which Rio responds "*Sabrina*—we saw it two months ago, remember? Starring Audrey Hepburn and William Holden" (237). The stylized image of film stars, for whom Rio and Pucha long, is predicated upon an affectation, a pretense. What is more, the vicarious pleasure that both Rio and Pucha, as well as the other characters, get from playing out their fantasy identities rests not upon a fact but upon celebrities in movies and telenovelas. Considered in political terms, the movie industry is "a great colonial tool" and "a wonderful way to seduce the minds and the hearts of people," as Hagedorn explains, and the movies are thus "absolutely" part of her memory (Bonetti 109). Although the novel opens in the 1950s and quickly moves on to the 1980s in the next chapter, it uses this episode of dress description in order to foreground the powerful influence that a Hollywood mode of representation has on the construction of class and gender in the Philippines. In *20th Century Fashion*, Linda Watson writes that in the 1950s, femininity was conflated with conformity and passivity. In terms of fashion designing, the 1950s represents the decade of tailor-made glamour in which Irving Penn produced "the illusion of absolute assurance" in his photographs of beautiful women (85). In this sense, the idea of dress and illusion reverberates suggestively across the novel, particularly with its intertextuality between Hollywood and the motif of dress, appearance, and artificiality.

In deploying a narrative strategy that focuses on the issues of dress, movies, and fictionality, Hagedorn emphasizes the performative nature of gender identity, with its investment in dress and stereotypical pose and artifice. What is captured in Rio's vestimentary description, as well as its resonance within the novel, is that her material world is mediated by representations of dress and Americanness. Rio's rearticulation of the past through remembrances of clothing gestures to the ways clothing and identities are intimately connected to the history and rememory of home, of Metro Manila. In the chapter "Her Mother, Rita Hayworth," Rio watches a flurry of activity taking place at her family home, narrating not only the happenings, but also the sartorial layers of various characters.[23] The title of this chapter announces the novel's concern with a culture imbricated with Hollywood, but which is negotiating its own fantasized version of an imagined Americanized urban metropolis. Events in the novel are re-narrated with a frequent stress on the sensuous colors of clothes, and with characters and settings that evoke the dramatic and emotional densities of metro Manila. Consider Rio's detailed description of her mother Dolores'rooms:

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[23] This is not to say that looking is the only form of fabric experience. As clothing is closely linked to the skin and body, it also appeals to the senses of smell and touch. My specific concern is to indicate the reading possibilities that a semiotics of dress and clothed bodies create.

> I love my mother's mysterious mauve rooms, so cool and softly lit. Whenever she looks in any of her mirrors it is always night and she is always beautiful. She designed the rooms herself, the dressing room with its floor-to-ceiling closets for my father's wardrobe and hers; the special shoe racks and tie racks and drawers just for stockings and lingerie, the closet doors with their full-length mirrors.... I spend hours here, watching her dress and undress. (84)

Rio's fascination with her parents' opulent dressing rooms and wardrobe points to the ways in which clothes are not only signifiers of the characters' identities, but also are artefacts of dreams, memories, and the reimagination of home. It is precisely this process of remembering clothes, of recounting the details of her mother's wardrobe, of engaging in sartorial desires and fantasies, of making contradiction explicit, that recalls what Michel Foucault posits as "a multiplicity of genealogical researches, a painstaking rediscovery of struggles together with the rude memory of their conflicts" (*Power/Knowledge* 83). In order to avoid trivializing the characters' investment in and treatment of dress and seeing their efforts as a gendered predisposition for fashion, it is important to see that the serious preoccupation with dressing up emerged out of specific historical and cultural circumstances. It is with these observations of clothes and desires in mind that I turn to the ways dress constitutes a system of signifiers that is associated with the social processes regulating appearance, class, and gender relations.

In "High Society," Rio narrates the bewildering variety of dress and adornment, of fabrics, frills, and flounces that style the characters of Hagedorn's novel accordingly. This chapter describes how Rio's parents honour the visit of her grandmother from Spain by throwing *bienvenida* parties, which provide the keenest glimpse into idealized, embodied femininity and the self-surveillance of female bodies. For wealthy characters, such parties have become a runway of sorts for them to strut their dressed bodies. Nevertheless, Rio's account of her relationship with dress gestures to her failure to live up to her mother's couture expectations. Trying out a new "red cotton satin dress trimmed with black rickrack" designed for her birthday party, Rio knows that she has to "wear this ridiculous outfit with an itchy petticoat" (83). Where Dolores treats clothing as an index of her class and gender identity, Rio's ambivalence about dress and subsequent protest against wearing "a stiff white crinoline underneath" her red dress reveals the process of coercive embodiment that is enforced on her (83). These moments are inserted into Rio's narrative to underscore her past experience in Manila before settling in America, a past that is characterized by resistance and negotiation of strictures her mother and society imposed on her. As Rio observes her mother's negotiation of fashion and comportment as part and parcel of her social status, she remarks: "She sips her drink, elegantly poised in one of her taffeta cocktail dresses, some Balmain replica Uncle Panchito has copied from one of her foreign magazines" (91 – 92).

So where in all this does Balmain fit in? Pierre Balmain (1914 – 1982) had a Parisian cachet and an illustrious clientele: he worked with Christian Dior and he dressed not only the queens and princesses of both East and West, but also the beautiful and famous. He designed for Bridget Bardot, Katharine Hepburn, Vivien Leigh, Queen Fabiola of Belgium, the "Duchess of Windsor, the Duchess of Kent, Sophia Loren and the Queen of Siam" (Watson 163). In Elizabeth Ewing's *History of 20th Century Fashion*, Balmain is the "[l]ast of the great names in traditional fashion," (234) and in Nancy L. Green's history of the apparel industry, Balmain is one of the leading figures in "the (re)-invention of newness" after World War II (101). After World War II, Balmain, along with other star designers like Coco Chanel and Jacques Fath, began to "design ready-to-wear for the French and American markets" (101). Balmain's corpus of work also includes designing uniforms for the airline industry in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[24] Specifically, the Balmain-designed sarong kebaya worn by Singapore Airlines's flight attendants functions as the airline's trademark, uniform, and the ultimate signifier of Asian hyperfemininity and sexuality. Based on business savvy, an Asian airline chose Balmain to fashion an idealized Asian femininity, that is, to design a uniform that allows air stewardess to perform a racialized gender identity. Balmain's emphasis on the interconnection of dress with the marketing of a tightly marshalled feminine identity was highly influential on the Asian fashion scene.

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[24] In *Airline, Identity, Design and Culture*, Keith Lovegrove explains that the plane's aisle was akin to "a stewardess's catwalk," catering to a male clientele (31). In the 1960s, Pierre Balmain designed for TWA and Singapore Airlines. For Singapore Airlines, Balmain created an aura of mysticism surrounding a flight attendant dressed in the signature batik Malay sarong kebaya. Inaugurated in 1972, Balmain's sarong kebaya uniform has become the ultimate signifier of Asian gender identity and the airline's marketing identity. Clad in the Balmain-designed uniform, a wax model of the air stewardess was the first commercial figure displayed at Madame Tussaud's waxworks museum in London in 1993 (36).

In the novel, star designers are in keeping with dress as a signifier of class and gender identities, especially when a designer like Balmain, who is both acclaimed in Paris and affiliated with the U.S., is referenced. The replication of Balmain design, and by extension his trademark femininity, recalls Simmels's notion of imitation as emanating from the desire for social distinction and for gaining acceptance in leisure circles, "making him the embodiment of a joint spirit" ("Fashion" 305). By evoking Balmain and the mimicry of his design, the novel not only calls attention to how much the high society in Manila has been influenced by U.S. colonial and neo-colonial power, but also alludes to how Balmain has been successful in immortalizing Asian feminine identity and penetrating the American designer marketplace. That identities are cumulatively produced as a result of careful, calculated designing underscores how race and gender are constituted in relation to designed, regulating ideals. The novel, by invoking Balmain, reminds us that it is necessary to critically interrogate the ways in which identities are constituted and designed. If Dolores chooses to look beyond locality and articulate her identity through a dress by using a design from imported fashion magazines, this conveys the power of what Fanella Cannell calls "the imagined America" via Balmain in the Philippines ("Power of Appearances"

249). Yet her choice of designers, including Balmain, also disrupts the tidy notion of Americanness and underwrites the circulation of the global in U.S. culture. I will return in some detail to track the overlapping layers of original and imitation in the novel, but here it is worth remarking that Dolores' choice of Balmain design, though it is in keeping with the latest fashion, raises questions about the heterogeneity and porosity of what is perceived as Americanness. In addition, what looms large in this scene is the sense that the production of magazines—and more broadly the fashion industry itself—is an important site for the formulation and dissemination of knowledge. Together with Hollywood movies, fashion magazines represent a privileged site where the fabric of knowledge, designer labels, styling of gender codes, luxury consumption, and the marketplace interlock. Within their fashion pages, magazines provide readers with both visual representations of garments and accessories and gender scripts associated with competency in class, grooming, and taste.[25] I suggest that the imitation of a design from fashion magazines does not lose the aura of Balmain, but rather the copy attempts "to partake of" the original and renders it "a sign in a system of signs of status," to borrow Arjun Appadurai's parlance ("Commodities and the Politics of Value" 45).

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[25] The circulation and imitation of high fashion designs in magazines can be traced to the launch of *Vogue*, a class conscious periodical that helps not only wealthy women to dress fashionably, but also "the less well-to-do cousins of the rich" to dress like "their affluent companions" (*Key Moments in Fashion* 36). As early as 1892, *Vogue* "billed itself as the 'dignified authentic journal of society, fashion and the ceremonial side of life'" for New York's upper classes (32). By the 1900s, Condé Nast, "the founding father of *Vogue*," asserted that the magazine is "the technical advisor—the clothing specialist—to the woman of fashion in the matter of her clothes and personal adornment" (36). Although the magazine I have considered was launched at the beginning of twentieth century, the ways in which it addresses women as gendered subjects is relevant to the contemporary process of the role of fashion magazines in disseminating and legitimatising vestimentary trends and the copying of couturiers' designs, including a range of global apparel marketing in *Dogeaters*.

Despite Dolores's deployment of what Gilles Lipovetsky terms "mimesis in fashion" in order to partake of the prestige of Balmain, Dolores's choice of dress also gestures to acts of re-clothing the body in response to social and political pressures (*The Empire of Fashion* 32). Through Dolores' dressed body, a gendered and social skin that mediates between self and society, the novel demonstrates that her chic wardrobe and social sophistication eclipse the strenuous effort that she, her manicurist Salvador, and her personal dressmaker Panchito put into the production of ideal femininity. While designer label apparel is considered what Veblen calls an "insignia of leisure" for the wealthy, the novel makes explicit how socially constructed notions of femininity generate anxieties and weigh down on the characters' bodies, which are subject to dietary regimes and self surveillance ("Dress as an Expression" 105). Rio notes that her mother "doesn't eat; she nibbles" (91). For Nena, "one of the best-dressed women in Manila, second to Isabel Alacran," the fashion honours bestowed upon her are only achieved through "a diet of ice-cream and TruColas, which she has for breakfast, lunch, and dinner" (89). The implication is that these high society women's mastery of dressed identities and the technologies of femininity conceal the labor and discipline that they put into acquiring them. To put it in another way, women expend much time, energy, and money on the pursuit of beauty and the wearing of designer clothes. Signalling social prestige, luxury clothing and beauty products constitute what Bourdieu calls "symbolic capital," used by both the middle- and upper-class as signifiers of social distinction. Constantly framed and foregrounded by their designer clothes, the high society characters are complicit in a discourse based on class exclusivity, a notion that the novel considers limiting. The exhibition of the dressed body, its placing in a theatre of vision in "high society," is situated in relation to class, gender, and social pressures in metropolitan Manila. Crucial to the elaboration of the concepts of famous designers and expensive wardrobes in the narrative is the interrogation of the contradictory position of women whose dressed bodies beautify Metro Manila and serve the class, economic, and gender interests of the patriarchal nation-state. By articulating the designer labels of the wealthy socialites, the narrative requires us to question the ways in which the contradictory connections between embodied social identities and the economic and political interests of the nation-state are presented as natural.

The novel also articulates social stratification and attributes the way in which class inflects designer dress to both the rich and the fashion designers, whose brands emblematize unequivocal social distinction and wealth. The desire for designer label clothing extends to Trinidad Gamboa, who is on the bottom rung of the ladder in SPORTEX, a Severo Alacran-owned department store that sells "overpriced dresses" (53). At the store, Trinidad "fingered the overpriced dresses and tried on patent leather shoes, dreaming of the day she could use a salesgirl's twenty-percent discount" (*Dogeaters* 53). No matter what class, clothing occupies a crucial place in those fantasies of success and power that arise from the wearing of luxury label clothing. For example, Trinidad enthuses about

Isabel Alacran's luxury outfit: "*Naku!* She was wearing a genuine Oscar de la Renta, I almost fainted it was so beautiful! It's a good thing I just got a perm and manicure and my counter was spic and span" (160). Clearly, Trinidad is proud to be an Alacran employee, yet the novel points out that she "works long hours without any breaks, isn't paid overtime, rushes through her lunch in less than forty minutes, and gratefully accepts her meagre salary" (160). At the department store, the staff are clad in "black and white uniforms and polished black shoes," and they are prohibited from putting on "any jewelry except watches" (159 – 160). By describing the ways in which employees are instructed to observe a dress code in order to project the store's "image of austere elegance," Hagedorn points to how dress functions as a corporate discipline over its workers (160). Such dress codes represent Foucault's concept of the panopticon, a management technique that exercises control and keeps the workers under surveillance. Much as Isabel Alacran's exquisite outfit offers visual pleasure, the novel invites us to interrogate the institutional contexts that sustain structures of inequality and maintain hierarchies of power over gendered labour, especially through the extraction of surplus labour.

The novel goes one step further in laying bare how economic relations determine the identities of characters, and how the imposition of work uniform acts as a strategy to demarcate social boundaries by way of occupation identity. At the Monte Vista clubhouse, a recreational facility for the rich and famous, Rio witnesses *yaya* Ana jumping into the swimming pool to save Congressman Abad's five-year-old daughter, despite the sign by the pool stating, "NO YAYAS

ALLOWED TO SWIM." Rio notes that Ana is "dressed in her spotless white uniform and matching white plastic slippers" (61). Ana's white uniform demarcates her socially inferior position and occupational identity, which is constitutive of Metro Manila's hierarchized divisions of labor. Further, the white uniform can be interpreted as a mechanism to police the borders of class and hygiene, and as an index of the privileged class's preoccupation with "obsessive cleanliness," to borrow Paul Fussell's words, and the threat of dirt and contagion from the outsider (154).[26] However, in even the most rigorous enforcement of dress code over Ana's body, there nonetheless lingers the possibility of transgression, that is, the failure of containing and regulating the movement of the working body subjected to the panoptic gaze. Indeed, Ana's jumping into the pool in her working attire illustrates the permeable borders of class categories in exclusive, private spaces. Whereas the regulated uniform relegates Ana to the position of the outsider, Hegedorn narrativizes this episode in recognition of the service that Ana has performed in the neo-colonial Philippine economy. Hagedorn invites us to identify with and witness Ana through the narrator and observer Rio, who undermines the coherence of the clubhouse's authority over a *yaya*. Although the novel seemingly concentrates on the élite women and men and on what they wear and do, closely attending to the ways in which Hagedorn deploys dress signifiers with relation to a systematic production and maintenance of a working class identity reveals a critical investment at the core of the novel in interrogating the ways in which the low-level workers are simultaneously defined by and constitutive of the socially inferior position they occupy.

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[26] In his account of the chef's white kitchen uniform in *Uniforms: Why We Are What We Wear*, Paul Fussell explains the choice of the colour white by analogy with "whitewings," sanitation workers dressed in white carrying cleaning paraphernalia, who collected refuse during parades in the Old World (155). In considering the domestic work that Ana does, Fussell's account is a good starting point for thinking about the interconnection between white uniform and hygiene, although he does not theorize it.

Given the presence of Hollywood film and the sustained modes of American influence in the Philippines media, American products such as clothes and makeup thus offer a sense of hope for the working class to escape the oppression of social stratification in Manila. If the novel depicts the material disparities and significations of identities that systematically marginalize women and men, it does not show the working class to be devoid of agency and desire for upward mobility and the American Dream. By providing Romeo Rosales "with an endless supply of flashy discount shirts and pants," including "imitation RayBans" from the SPORTEX department store, Trinidad imagines that he may escape his material poverty through clothes and fulfill his ambition to become an actor (164, 166).[27] In his letter to his mother, Romeo expresses his concerns about his upcoming screen audition, stating that "Tito says it's not just about singing well [sic] talent scouts are on the lookout for the way you dress" (129). Although Romeo's class identity is clearly coded and marked on his body, causing him anxiety and dismay, he desires and seeks an alternative embodied identity and its attendant material gains. If attire is ultimately about "an indication of our pecuniary standing to all observers at the first glance," in Veblen's words, then what Romeo's clothing enables is an opportunity to become a movie star and obtain a pecuniary advantage for himself ("Dress as an Expression" 103). Bourdieu provides a useful vehicle to consider Romeo's wardrobe tactics via his interpretations of social practice and judgement, both of which are highly instrumentalized and subconscious. For Bourdieu, social practice emanates from struggles to obtain benefits and status through which various forms of capital can be accumulated. Extending Bourdieu's concept of instrumental social practice, I read Romeo's investment in appearance and dress as an investment in its exchange-value, that is, in terms of what advantages it can accrue to him. Circumscribed by steeply hierarchical social structures, Romeo's clothing offering becomes a process of negotiation and opportunity. In this, dress becomes social capital and may contingently offer him an opportunity to star in a movie. Instead of reviling characters for being preoccupied with the marketplace, the novel accommodates the pleasure and economic gains in dressing up as an ongoing, performative process. Popular movie star Lolita Luna's onscreen and off-screen lifestyle can be read much the same way as Romeo Rosales (50). Incidentally, Romeo is Lolita Luna's "biggest fan" and is obsessed with peeking through "the clinging, wet, white nightgown she happened to be wearing when plunged into the Agno river" in *The Agony of Love* (49). Keeping in mind that Lolita Luna is anxious to secure a visa to America, the eroticised image outfitted and personified by her represents an aspiration. Here is a "sex goddess" whose wardrobe makes her body a visible object of desire and commodification — and available to the rich, famous, and powerful (51).

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[27] At the same time, Trinidad's gift underscores "the constant grounding of social relations in material relations," to borrow Daniel Miller's term, so that her love manifests itself in the clothes and accessories that she believes might enable him to gain upward mobility (*The Dialectics of Shopping* 184).

Just as Americanized products present the U.S. as a land of opportunity where characters can pursue their dreams, clothing enables the characters to gain access to the imagined freedoms, opportunity, and plenitude of wealth that the U.S. can afford to all. As an actress and General Nicasio Ledesma's mistress, Lolita Luna identifies with the U.S. and conceptualizes everything in terms of "a scene from a movie" so that her relationship with the General is as much a theatrical performance augmented by clothes (96). Lolita Luna's reenactment of scenarios and filmic representations of femininity, as it is restaged through dress, in fact, demonstrates that gender is also constituted and regulated by media narratives. While General Ledesma asks Lolita "What costume are you putting on for me today?", she asks him to "pay for a dress she has ordered" (97). Precisely where costume is used as a theatrical tool that enables the performance and specific expectations of gender, there is simultaneously an undermining of any notion of natural, normal femininity. Fittingly, clothing plays such an important role in the everyday and in her relationships with powerful men that Lolita Luna "dreams" of shopping trips to Los Angeles and New York, where she purchases "at least two of each" item (171). The narrative shows how Lolita Luna's desire for and patronage of American designer outfits are in tune with the ways in which characters view the U.S. as the fount of all fashion. But if Lolita Luna's acquisition of Americanized goods and fashion conjures up an urban city of feminized consumption, the novel debunks this totalizing stereotype of women and makes visible the diversity of the ways in which sartorial desire is represented and staged.

As Beth Day Romulo puts it, Imelda Marcos was enamoured with "theatrical effects" and was "quite good" at staging VIPs arrivals at Manila International Airport as spectacles, "with hundreds of costumed schoolchildren bussed in to line the tarmac" (*Inside the Palace* 56). Idealized by Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon as the "Jewel of the Pacific" and the "Angel from Asia" respectively, the figure of Imelda Marcos diminishes the poor living conditions and suffering of her citizens (Ellison 8). Katherine Ellison writes that before the end of the Marcos era, "the world knew her as full-fledged Dragon Lady" (8), and Seagrave observes that people in the Philippines called her "the madwoman of Malacañang" (389). What then might this imply for Imelda Marcos as the inhabiter of an American civility and tradition? According to Ellison, both Manilans and Americans "never seemed to tire of hearing how and what [Imelda Marcos] bought" in the 1980s (213). Hagedorn makes effective use, then, of Imelda Marcos and her dress consumption and creates the character Madame to draw in readers. By translating Imelda and transnational politics into social drama, Hagedorn's novel demonstrates how Madame's dressed body becomes fodder for popular consumption and evaluation. How might we interrogate the problematic representation of Imelda Marcos, both as a hypervisible body on sartorial display and as an object of consistent lampooning? To what extent can the depiction of Madame be understood within the terms of American institutional systems? I suggest that her character is a productive force precisely in demonstrating the interface between the legacy of American political machinery and the excesses and pleasures that are intertwined with power. To flesh out the novel's representation Madame and her fashioned body, I will explore the extent to she is moulded by American civilizing programs, even as she reappropriates American models of beauty and fashion glamour.

Taking into account *Dogeaters*'s trenchant censure of Madame's excessive investment in clothes, I want to ask at this juncture, is Madame's spectacular sartorial embodiment so important, and if so, for whom? In an interview with Steve, "the foreign journalist," the First Lady, "all dressed up," talks about fashion and her esteem for Oscar de la Renta (223). With Ronald Reagan reigning over the decade, the 1980s was dominated by conspicuous dressing and admiration of movie stars and status symbols (Linda Watson, *20th Century Fashion* 120). "In the eighties, it was back into rich, opulent clothes, which were my thing," says de la Renta in *Oscar* (Mower 97 – 98). Indeed, de la Renta's flamboyant, grandiose signature style is designed for "the grandest of American formal occasions" (Mower 79). Born and raised in the Dominican Republic, de la Renta became a U.S. citizen in 1971. He is the personification of the American Dream, a man who has tenaciously pulled through the fluctuations and transience of fashion. A frequent visitor to the White House, de la Renta counts Henry Kissinger, Barbara Walters, Ivana Trump, Joan Collins, and Nancy Reagan among his friends (Watson 205). In the 1970s, élite French luxury clothing designers "became global celebrities" whose fashion designs and "made-to-order clothes" were sold in the global marketplace (Diana Crane, *Fashion and* *its Social Agendas* 142). By 1993, Oscar de la Renta had joined the ranks of global celebrities when he became the first American designer to Pierre Balmain in Paris, and one of the rare non-Parisians to be chosen as head designer of a Paris couture house (Mower 184; Kevin Doyle, "Oscar Sews up Couture" 1). So, it is no accident that Madame articulates her respect for de la Renta, who is widely touted as a diplomat and prestigious fashion designer: he dresses Nancy Reagan in the 1980s.

Until the 1960s, American designers had been either haute couturiers, making customized clothing for the rich and famous, or invisible designers, producing clothes that bore the labels of their buyers. de la Renta was among the few name-brand designers who emerged in the early 1960s via ready-to-wear clothing, a fashion business that melded American sportswear with Parisian fashion (Ann T. Kellogg, *In an Influential Fashion* 77 – 78). Besides designing for his de la Renta line, de la Renta counted among his clients Jackie Onassis, Nancy Kissinger, Hilary Clinton, and Laura Bush, not to mention artists, Hollywood movie stars, and celebrities. In this, Madame and de la Renta have fairly evident links which are themselves intervolved in designing and legitimatising an image. Madame carves out a reputation for herself as a highly fashionable First Lady who claims that that she has "an American mind" and that "America and the Philippines are the same" ("Playboy Interview" 55, 60). de la Renta carves out a niche for himself as a leading American designer for Balmain in both the competitive Parisan clothing industry and global marketplace. Both Madame's garments and de la Renta's imitation designs, whether worn on the political stage or sold in upscale markets, have gained wide visibility through global media and helped secure their celebrity status. Through this emphasis on an American luxury clothing designer, the novel underscores the powerful influence of American ideals of beauty, class, and gender identity, when designer clothing is factored into a sedimented history of America-Philippines political and social relations. In "Maisoui, Oscar!" Martha Duffy notes that de la Renta is "a copyist," not an innovator of fashion design, who tailors a sense of grand luxury through the inflection of his creations with the Balmain aesthetic and exquisite taste. As such, *Dogeaters* points out that de la Renta's creations are not innovative but an imitation and suggests that the notion of an original American design is already problematic.

In "White Love: Surveillance and Nationalist Resistance in the U.S. Colonization of the Philippines," Vicente L. Rafael states that colonial accounts and travelogues from the late-sixteenth to the early-twentieth centuries often mention that Filipinos "could excel only in copying their colonial and class superiors" (197). "Mimicry on the part of the natives," Rafael continues, "is construed as a sign of inferiority borne out of racial difference" (198). As Hagedorn attests: "Like most Filipinos, I was brainwashed from infancy to look outside the indigenous culture for guidance and inspiration. Taught that the label 'Made in the U.S.A.' meant automatic superiority …. Our only talent, it seems, is for mimicry" (Conference Presentation 147). Stanley Karnow speaks of how the history of American rule has left Filipinos "confused and ambivalent": "their attitudes toward the United States vacillated between imitation and resentment, subservience and defiance, adulation and contempt, love and hate" (*In His Image* 16). My reading of the mimesis of fashion design extends beyond this particular way in which Filipinos are interpellated as subjects, including a naturalization of their mimetic skills, which sidesteps analysis of modes of resistance and re-creation emerging from Filipinos themselves. To push the point further, this idea of mimicry that ostensibly comes naturally to Filipinos also helps perpetuate the domination of American culture, serves economic interests, and accounts for the persistence of discrimination. *Dogeaters* sets up scenarios in which the fascination with imitation and original leads to the unfolding of the internalization of discipline by characters as well as histories of Philippine diaspora. But precisely what does the novel say about the idea of the original?

In *Dogeaters*, what is perceived to be "original" is never, properly speaking, original. Mark Johnson, in *Beauty and Power: Transgendering and Cultural Transformation in the Southern Philippines*, produces a genealogical analysis of transvestite beauty and supermodel competitions, as well as costume parades, which is helpful in theorizing how Uncle Panchito engages in reconstituting his gender identity in the novel. "Beauty contests," Johnson writes, "encapsulate the sense of empowerment and pleasure articulated in the notion of 'exposing my beauty'" (218). For Uncle Panchito, donning female clothing, including reappropriating American standards of beauty, is in effect a redesigning of gender to which he re-signs, rearticulating it because it represents a way of negotiating his beauty and gender identity.[28] "I am who I am," he says to Dolores, suggesting a pleasurable ease in putting on "dresses and other women's clothes from time to time" (81). Uncle Panchito's "leopard-print shirt tied in a knot at the waist" and "black Capri pants" are drag, as are his cosmetics, "electric blue stilettos," and "skimpy, shimmering swimsuits," which are given to him by Dolores (81). More significantly, Uncle Panchito often succeeds in winning "Most Original" at transvestite beauty competitions (81).[29] In this, transvestite beauty competitions can be read as a site of performative pleasure, power, and what Mark Johnson calls "transgenderal expressions," inasmuch as they are considered "celebratory events or 'happenings'" (113, 218). If gender is performative, in Judith Butler's sense, then clothes form the constituents of the "surface politics of the body" for Uncle Panchito, who improvises and seeks affinities between American-identified forms of feminine beauty and local culture (*Gender Trouble* 173). Quickly, then, what looks at first like a beauty queen turns into a hybridized form of mimicry. At stake in the appellation "Most Original" is that Uncle Panchito's identity is always already a performative identity, socially pre-scripted in a particular category, namely, as a representation of feminine beauty and sartorial identity.

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[28] In *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diasporas*, Martin F. Manalansan IV elaborates the idioms *biyuti* and *drama*, which "pertain to aspects of personhood, demeanor, and self-fashioning" (15). Whereas Cannell translates *biyuti* as "beauty," Manalansan IV uses *biyuti* and *drama* "to encapsulate a self-conscious notion of performance that is embedded not only in gendered phenomena but in the exigencies of everyday life, including those of kinship and family, religion, sexual desire, and economic survival" (15).

[29] In his detailed anthropological study, Mark Johnson has usefully unpacked the ways in which cross-dressing interlinks with representations of beauty and power. As well, Johnson observes that male transvestites not only work in beauty parlours, they also run and choreograph beauty competitions for women and transvestites, as well as "school talent shows" (31). See also Fanella Cannell's anthropological investigation of male transvestites and the imitation of American forms of beauty ("The Power of Appearances" 223 – 255). Both Cannell and Johnson shift our attention from the perception of transvestite beauty contestants as performing wholesale imitations of America and turn it to understanding contestants as, according to Johnson, demonstrating "an already domesticated West, a global cosmopolitanism situated and transformed by local sensibilities" (*Beauty and Power* 54).

In Bhabha's formulation, Uncle Panchito's mimicry of American standards of beauty reveals the process of splitting, revealing his mimicry as "a part-object that radically revalues the normative knowledges of the priority of race, writing, history" ("Of Mimicry and Man" 91). This is why the narrative deploys epithets such as "fake," "imitation," and "replica" (91, 149) in order to trouble the politics behind the categorical difference of the "original" or, as Bhabha terms it, "authentic," a politics that classifies and hierarchicizes representations of people and dress identities (88). Just as the novel challenges notions of gender and sartorial fixity, it draws attention to the constitution of gender as this performative, dynamic process which is informed by a history of colonial discourse, concepts of beauty in fashion magazines, and Hollywood films reframed in specific contexts and locales. Importantly, the theme of new beginnings and new possibilities is evident in Panchito's assuming centre stage as the narrating subject and winning the accolade of being the most original transvestite beauty queen. The transgressive excess of Panchito's dress is narratively significant because it crosses sartorial borders and subverts any idealization of an essentialized, fixed identity. Rather, Panchito embodies through dress the evolutionary, open-ended transformation of identities. Far from being a mechanical, slavish imitation of American concepts of ideal gender identity, Panchito's embodied identity can be read as an original re-styling of gender by making creative use of dresses that Dolores can never find a use for. Insisting on his own agency, Panchito is a resourceful fashionista, whose dressed body generates both his own narrative of identities and affective relationships with his clients. In this, the original is divested of its exclusivity and power on which it depends. Hagedorn uses Panchito's performative gender identity to assert that although Filipinos are stereotyped as imitators, they are determined to be originals by drawing on and synthesizing knowledge and resources to reinvent their own identities. How, then, might we reconsider Madame's conscious fashioning of herself as an original spectacle? Long before Imelda Marcos was panned by critics, she gained prominence and international recognition for her spectacular designer gowns and beauty. Praising Imelda Marcos was tantamount to extolling the merits of U.S. colonialism in the Philippines. I would suggest that Imelda Marcos exploited and turned to good advantage the essentialist image of the exotic, desirable body, a body schooled in all things American, dressed in contemporary chic or heritage gown. The power and privilege bestowed on her by Ferdinand Marcos allowed her to lead diplomatic missions and headline negotiations with the IMF or government leaders.

The novel can be read as a critique of Althusserian "ideological state apparatuses" and the ideological resonance and political implications they have for the inhabitants of Manila. According to Imelda Marcos, *The New York Times,* *Life, Time, and Newsweek* called the Marcoses "the Kennedys of the Far East," when they were elected as President and First Lady ("Playboy Interview" 61). Without denying Imelda Marcos's squandering on clothes and shoes, I want to reconsider the complexities of the fictional version of the First Lady and her embodied identity and wardrobe investment in the context of larger historical, political, and economic structures as well as the trajectory of transnational capitalism.[30] James Hamilton-Paterson registers an exception to the otherwise uniform condemnation of Imelda Marcos's profligate spending on clothes and shoes, stating that her consumption "is quite normal by local standards" (*America's Boy* 136). He notes that the "jetting around on international brand-name shopping sprees of the most vulgar kind—all of these are exemplified (or aspired to) daily by Manila's *arriviste* socialites" (136). Hamilton-Paterson's anti-sexist and suggestive explication of shopping as it applies to Imelda Marcos and socialites in Manila echoes that of the novel's wardrobe imaging of Dolores Gonzaga, Isobel Alacran, Nena, Cristina Ford, and high society. This, I would argue, is why it is essential to dismantle the feminizing and homogenizing assumptions about characters interested in dressing up themselves. Bearing in mind that Imelda Marcos receives an education based on the U.S. system and gets the inspiration of her own American Dream from Hollywood, I would add that her version of a Camelot bespeaks the ways in which Hollywood movies and American influence have made a profound impact not only on Imelda Marcos, but also on the Philippines as a whole. As Hagedorn wryly comments in her own personal chronology of the Philippines: "The smart and stylish Marcoses model themselves after JFK and Jackie, with their own version of a Philippine 'Camelot'" (*Dogeaters: A Play* 119). In Hagedorn's characterization of the Marcoses, I suggest, it is the critique of the history of U.S. colonization, which included providing the elite class "models of 'modern' behaviour," that is simultaneously part of the history of contemporary Philippines (Terence Ranger 212).

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[30] There are any number of texts on the Marcoses and the Marcos régime (1965 – 1986), many of them offering photographs depicting the sumptuously dressed President and First Lady with a stately bearing, not to mention entertaining accounts and descriptions of Imelda Marcos's spending habits. For example, Sterling Seagrave cites a CIA review stating that Imelda Marcos "is ambitious and ruthless …. She has a thirst for wealth, power and public acclaim" (260); and Raymond Bonner writes that she flew to New York "for psychiatric treatment" and that her "spending binges are a classic manifestation of the manic stage, according to doctors" (55). Not only do these texts undercut the complexities of geopolitical neo-colonialism and discourses of race and gender by relegating Imelda Marcos's character to sexist stereotypes, they also obscure the effects of American imperialism in Southeast Asia.

When the Marcoses visited the U.S. in 1966, H. W. Brands writes, "many Americans congratulated themselves that their former colony could produce such a pair" (*Bound to Empire* 284). This version of a Philippine Camelot was consistent with Kennedy's Camelot, insofar as it represented an expensive, glamorous lifestyle and stylish wardrobe. If Jackie Kennedy was a trendsetter for couturier fashions, then Imelda Marcos certainly adopted, mimicked, and modified Jackie's extravagance and style as well as spendthrift habits. In *America's Queen: The Life of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis*, Sarah Bradford writes, "Jackie was a passionate follower of fashion: she read all the international fashion magazines, knew exactly where to buy the best shoes in Florence" (146).

Bradford also describes the profligacy of Jackie's wardrobe expenditure, and points out that the bookkeeper Mary Gallagher noted Jackie '"seemed to be a compulsive buyer'" (207). Yet whereas Jackie Kennedy's fashion extravagance is contained by the romance of the storybook Camelot, and whereas Nancy Reagan's materialism is rendered as concurrent with the opulent era of the 1980s, Imelda Marcos's excessively consumerist wardrobe is severely condemned. However, what I want to elaborate is not so much Madame's collection of spike heels and dress as the fact that racialized femininity has always assumed an a priori reasoning, that is, racialized feminine material extravagance as pathological and undisciplined. In the introduction to *Shoes: A Lexicon of Style*, Valerie Steele writes, "There is a bit of Imelda Marcos in many women" (8). If Imelda Marcos, who makes clear that she wants "to be surrounded by what is beautiful," constitutes the very stuff that exists in women's desire with regard to shoes, it is also the reason she is often viewed with contempt as an object of excess and pathology ("Playboy Interview" 56).[31] And yet this passing of judgement on Imelda Marcos, although it does not appear to have anything to do with

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[31] When *Playboy* queried whether she left three thousand pairs of shoes in her palace closet after her fall from grace in 1986, Imelda Marcos admits that she "was not always parochial," although she "did wear a lot of Filipino-made shoes," like Oleg Cassini, which is "franchised in the Philippines" (55). "The point is," Imelda claims, "by making these shoes, we were able to give jobs to our people" (55). In this, *Dogeaters* gestures to the limited job opportunities in Metro Manila, where women and men are employed in the entertainment-cum-tourism-cum-prostitution industry. This idea of economic hardship is important when considering the untenability of Marcos's foreign investment policy that involves setting up duty-free export zones for labor-intensive manufacturing industries. The jobs that Imelda Marcos offered to her people—zone workers from peasant families—earned them "one of the lowest average wage levels in this part of the world," boasted Ferdinand Marcos (*Revolution in the Philippines* 327).

Americans themselves, can be read as having much more to do with American uneasiness at Imelda, who renders visible American processes of desire and identification. In "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," Homi K. Bhabha states, "the excess or slippage produced by the *ambivalence* of mimicry (almost the same, *but not quite*) does not merely 'rupture' the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a 'partial' presence" (86; original emphasis). As Bhabha asserts that the "*menace* of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority," *Dogeaters* illustrates the ambivalence toward Madame as mimic-American and the recreation of her own version of Camelot (88; original emphasis).[32] Particularly telling is the novel's description of Madame's "female attendants," whose blue uniform signifies a blueprint for fashioning class and gender identities (217). By drawing attention to Madame's "entourage of crones dressed in pastel blue," the novel subverts any idealization of her authority to tutor young upper-crust protégés (122). Precisely because Madame is seen as a figure of simultaneous horror and appeal, she evokes not only American cultural anxieties about the failure to civilize the ethnic other, but also concerns over women's unmanageable wardrobe indulgence and surface embellishments.

Relevant to my discussion of racialized feminine dress indulgence is Raymond Bonner's observation that Imelda Marcos showered Nancy Reagan with gifts, such as sending the U.S. First Lady two dresses valued at US$10,000 (*Waltzing with a Dictator* 430). Here, the gift of gowns is not only a tool of "dressing up" a friendship between two First Ladies, but also of furthering a network of economic, military, and political involvements. Christopher Hitchens points out that in 1980, Marcos established a special committee, with Imelda Marcos at the helm, "to review U.S. regulations, [and] reinforce personal friendship with Ronald and Nancy Reagan" ("Minority Report" 478). Through third parties, the committee contributed US$7 million to the Reagan-Bush campaign in 1980, as well as US$10 million to selected candidates in the 1982 midterm elections (478). In 1982, the Marcoses were granted an official visit to Washington by the Reagan administration at long last, though previously they were denied this trip by Nixon, Ford, and Carter.[33] It is in this light that *Dogeaters* may be read as a critique of the complicity and collaboration between the Marcoses and the American government, as a way to unmask how America enables and legitimates Marcos's abuses of the law and transgressive violence toward his subjects. Rather than simply faulting the Marcoses for what is widely regarded as "the conjugal dictatorship," I suggest unpacking the tyranny of Marcoses's authoritarian régime by problematizing the politics of the U.S. involvement, particularly Reagan's endorsement of the Marcos dictatorship in the early 1980s (Ellison 8). For the moment, I want to explore the international context of U.S.-Philippine sartorial relations in order to flesh out the complexity of *Dogeaters*'s investment in dress signifiers.

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[32] Although Madame's mimicry may bring attention to the mechanisms of colonial power, I am cautious about applying Bhahba's concept of mimicry to her. Hagedorn presents Bhabha's narrative of mimicry, but Madame herself is not necessarily emancipated or able to break out of that discourse.

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[33] Almost 1,000 Filipinos were assembled and "supplied with miniature flags and T-shirts reading 'I am a Filipino'" (Bonner 317). In addition, Filipinos held banners announcing these slogans: "'Long Live Marcos and Reagan' and 'You are the idol of the Filipinos'" (317). Transmitted to the Philippines by satellite, the spectacle of the state visit and the Reagan administration's support of the Marcos's régime resonate with *Dogeaters*'s larger context of dress and appearance, most significantly is the way in which identities and affect are rendered in signifiers of dress such as T-shirts and gowns. These opposing class signifiers readily inform the audience of their President's and First Lady's hierarchical position and the supporting role of the largely homogeneous T-shirt-clad Filipino commoners.

The Gilded Age Redux

To gain a fuller understanding of how the tension between the geopolitical utility of élite designers' clothes and class and gender identities plays out in the novel, I focus on a specific moment in dress history—the rising popularity of highbrow designers in the 1980s. While glam rock, punk, Orientalism, and disco influenced fashion in the 1970s, fashion designers like Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein also rose to international prominence at the time. According to Linda Watson, Ralph Lauren comprehended the role of "sartorial storytelling, building a brand around an image," and New York saw the emergence of "a coterie of world-class designers" (*20th Century Fashion* 112).[34] Drawing upon Ralph

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[34] In *Genuine Authentic: The Real Life of Ralph Lauren*, Michael Gross writes that Lauren utilizes elements such as "self-expression and imitation, privilege and pretend" and parlays them into marketing his brand of American fashion and lifestyle (3). Gross adds that the world-wide success of Lauren's upper-crust apparel bespeaks not only the appeal of his designs to the class-conscious clients of the 1980s, but also his mastery of "the globalization of branding and the simultaneous Americanization of international fashion" (3). If Lauren's merchandizing of American West lifestyle fashion thrives on narratives of "the universality of American-style aspiration" and "shared fantasies," to use Gross's words, then Polo/Ralph Lauren wardrobe stories are evocative of the interweaving

Lauren's concept of "sartorial storytelling," I suggest that designer outfits afford the characters in *Dogeaters* a way to articulate and affirm their exclusive lifestyle narrative. As well, the notion of what Watson calls "the onset of the designer decade" sheds light on the characters' fixation on designer label clothing in the novel (112). In "Designer Labels—Corporate Chic," Melissa Richards states that fashion and the "obsession with class" operate in tandem in the 1980s, a decade that shares certain affinities with the late-nineteenth century (161). She writes: "The making of a new *haute bourgeoisie* was in at least one respect similar to the emergence of the industrial rich in the 19th Century; the way they spent money" (158). For Richards, magazines, films, and television soap operas presented the audience with clothes and accessories, including "the lifestyle of the rich and famous" (161). In this sense, in the image-conscious 1980s, as in the Gilded Age 1880s, the wealthy flaunting their clothes with a designer label is tantamount to showing off their money. I do not mean that the 1980s would follow the particular vestimentary trajectory of the late nineteenth century. Rather, I invoke the Gilded Age because the modernity of dressing women and men—their representation as metropolitanically sophisticated and stylish—has a long history. During the Reagan reign, Ronald Reagan and his wife, Nancy, former film stars, wore designer clothing and surrounded themselves with the wealthy upper crust. As Susan J. Douglas contends of "women in the age of Reagan" in *Where the Girls Are*, the Reagans were instrumental in the creation of a "cult of narcissism" (247). Elucidating advertising agencies' "appropriation of

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of political and international, of American and the Philippine concerns in *Dogeaters* (2).

feminist desires and feminist rhetoric," Douglas writes: "'I'm worth it' became the motto for the 1980s woman we saw in television and magazines ads. Endless images of women lounging on tiled verandas, or snuggling with their white angora cats while wearing white silk pyjamas, exhorted us to be self-indulgent, self-centred, private, hedonistic" (246, 245). I want to connect Douglas' observations on the "cult of narcissism" fostered by the Reagans in the 1980s with Imelda Marcos (249). The leisure lifestyle and excess wardrobe of the Reagans, especially Nancy Reagan, who loved high fashion, echo the high living and conspicuous dressing of Madame and the material wives of *Dogeaters*.[35] The designers' names and the media hype surrounding Imelda Marcos's clothes and shoes underpin the complex ensemble of intertwined international relations, access to power, and clothing connoisseurship that enable the Marcos and Reagan governments to secure their authority and economic and social interests. Crucial to the ways both governments are interimplicated, is the understanding of U.S. economic and military self-interest and geopolitical force in the Philippines.

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[35] According to Gil Troy, Nancy Reagan wore a US$10,000 gown at the 1981 sixteen-million-dollar inauguration (*Morning in America* 50). "Splashy consumption," Troy contends, "became a way to demonstrate confidence" and repaired the economic crises of the 1970s (51). In *Dress Codes: Meanings and Messages in American Culture*, Ruth P. Rubinstein writes that Nancy Reagan made use of designer clothing as a "visual support" to Ronald Reagan's vision of wealth and success as expressed through extravagant dress (229). Dating from 1982, Rubinstein adds, Nancy Reagan failed to report the numerous gowns and pieces of jewellery that she received on loan, in contravention of "the 1978 Ethics in Government Act" (230). In this sense, the First Lady's role in the representation of the national image, that is economic success, was of great importance. The character of Madame can be interpreted as grounded in and emerging from the political and friendship ties between the First Ladies of the U.S. and the Philippines.

Cynthia Enloe's study of American military occupation and offshore apparel production in the Philippines in *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* might be usefully factored into my discussion of the semiotics of dress in *Dogeaters*. She argues that while brothels are located in U. S. military spots such as Clark, Subic Bay, and Wallace, they are also found in tourist epicentres like Manila and Cebu in the mid-1980s. Analyzing the sex industry in the Philippines in the 1980s, Enloe asserts that Ferdinand Marcos strategically made use of stereotypes of Asian women, stereotypes of Filipino culture, and stereotypes of Western feminism to promote the sex industry in order to alleviate the country's economic issues and budget deficit. Not surprisingly, given Enloe's sharp examination of the intricacies of "international garment-trade politics," she is particularly attentive to a Third World labor force both within and outside America (157). It is in such a context that Delia D. Aguilar's essay "Lost in Translation: Western Feminism and Asian Women" becomes important in shaping discussions about Asian/Pacific women. Aguilar cautions against subscribing to a global sisterhood and emphasizes the importance of situating our understanding of Asian/Pacific women within governmental policies and larger international economic agendas (153 – 165). While large numbers of Filipino women migrate overseas as domestic or healthcare workers or mail-order brides, those who do not have the opportunity to transmigrate work in the "entertainment industry" or in garment factories, where women are seen as having the "genetic" attributes "to sit patiently" (Aguilar 162). As well, Enloe's account of how "international advisers" prompted many Third

World countries "to develop service sectors before manufacturing industries mature" helps to problematize the teleology of the domestic manufacturing economy (36). Thus, rather than taking the growth of the sex service industry in the Philippines as the logical trajectory of a decline in the manufacturing sector, I extend Enloe's observations to note the articulation of sex tourism in *Dogeaters* as a gesture to the way in which the tourism economy might be established in tandem with or before the proliferation of the apparel industry. Taking advantage of the relocation of manufacturing activities under the globalization of the market economy, Marcos implemented an export-oriented policy, which included promulgating the availability of Filipino labor in both local and overseas markets in the beginning of 1970s.[36] That is to say, the staging of Filipino female and male bodies in the tourist services industry with all its concomitant submissive femininity in the novel serves to render legible a strategy of the Marcos government to attract foreign investment to tap into the availability of Filipino labor for both the tourist gaze and the garment manufacturing industry.

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[36] For more on the relationships between the reliance on foreign investment and low-wage labor, see Annette Fuentes and Barbara Ehrenreich, *Women in the Global Factory*, Boston: South End Press, 1983. For a thorough account of the Philippine government setting up an Overseas Employment Development Board in 1974 to promote the mass transmigration of Filipino nurses to the United States, see Catherine Ceniza Choy, "Asian American History: Reflections on Imperialism, Immigration, and 'The Body,'" *Pinay Power. Peminist Critical theory: Theorizing the Filipina/American Experience*, ed. Melinda L. de Jesús, New York: Routledge, 2005, 81 – 91. In "Caring across Borders: Motherhood, Marriage, and Filipina Domestic Workers in California," Charlene Tung makes a related observation about the "(trans)national benefits" of Filipino transmigrant labor: "Dependence on global financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund continues, further disabling local economies as the government direct its resources toward debt repayment rather than toward agricultural reforms or social services for its people" (303). According to Tung, the export of Filipino workers constitutes part of the global Philippine diaspora, whose remittances help reduce an estimated $45 billion national debt by at least $5 billion a year (302).

In the chapter "Blue Jeans and Bankers," Enloe makes reference to the 1980s when both American and European clothing designers began to contract out the manufacture of garments to "Asia, North Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean" (156). According to Enloe, indebted governments like the Marcos régime utilized the international bankers' strategy by attracting manufacturing companies to set up their factories in the "Export Processing Zone" (159). Governments from these EPZs offered incentives like infrastructure, police security, and, most importantly, cheap labor to electronics and sewing and garment manufacturing industries. As Enloe cogently explains:

> The risk-taking banker needs the conscientious seamstress to hold his world together. The politician and his technocratic advisor need the seamstress to keep the banker and his home government pacified. If the seamstress rebels, if she rethinks what it means to be a woman who sews for a living, her country may turn up on the lists of "unstable regimes" now kept by politically sensitive bankers. (160)

"Levis Jeans in Manila," Enloe continues, "is remarkably like garment factories in New York, Manchester, Toronto, Moscow or Colombo: women are the sewing-machinists; men are the cutters and the pressers" (162). Attention to the international politics of investment, loans, debts, trade, and gendered labor, as Enloe posits, can help to identify and open up the discussion about dress to account for identificatory categories of class, gender, and economic issues in *Dogeaters*.

In *Indonesia and the Philippines: American Interests in Island Southeast Asia*, Robert Pringle notes that the anti-Marcos forces in the Filipino American community had been petitioning against American aid to President Marcos ever since he declared Martial Law in 1972.[37] As the Laurel-Langley Agreement, which continued the legal provisions of the Philippine Trade Act of 1946 and provided special privileges to American entrepreneurship, was to expire in 1974, there was a surge of Philippine nationalism, such as demonstrations and protests held at the American embassy (Pringle 119 – 123). The Martial Law, through the enforcement of legislation and regulation, not only quelled the unrest caused by the Philippine nationalists, but also served to offer a change of political climate and encourage foreign investment. While crackdowns, political detention, mass arrests, torture, and murder were the order of the day, Reagan endorsed the military regime, giving Marcos carte blanch to redouble the Philippine military, an armed forces that America had provided with military training, weaponry and uniforms from the outset (*Revolution in the Philippines* 30).

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[37] International criticism levelled at Marcos had focused on arbitrary arrests, detention, "disappearances," and torture (Pringle 104). When it was time to negotiate a renewal of military base and compensation package, Marcos sent Imelda Marcos to meet with President Carter in New York in 1977, "an unprecedented encounter largely ignored by the U.S. press but heavily publicized in Manila" (Pringle 110 – 111). Given the criticisms against Marcos over his severe violation of human rights, it is not surprising that the American press snubbed Imelda Marcos's trip to New York.

To protect its strategic economic and military interests in the Far East, the U.S. increased its military aid to Ferdinand Marcos when he implemented the World Bank- and American-backed martial law in 1972. In addition to US$140.1 million, Marcos received US$100 million for use of military bases in 1982. In 1983, the Reagan administration pledged to give US$900 million to the Marcos regime as rental of military facilities at Subic and Clark, purportedly to contain communism in Asia and to bring the world into line in the post-cold war era. The military bases serve to secure America's control over the Asia-Pacific region, as well as function as a storage space for nuclear weapons (Davis, *The Philippines* 53 – 56). At the same time, Kang notes that the Marcos government was riddled with "staggering" graft: "Whether the estimates are $5 billion or $20 billion, the Marcos regime perfected the art of corruption" (*Crony Capitalism* 148). By 1983, however, the foreign debt was more than US$26 billion, and economic growth reached a plateau, resulting in widespread poverty in the country ("A Million, a Billion There" 40).[38] I highlight Marcos' expropriation of assets and subsequent economic and political turmoil in the 1980s in order to explore the chapter entitled "Bananas and the Republic."

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[38] In "Foreign Investment in the Philippines," David G. and Patricia J. Scalise describe how the imposition of Martial Law was backed by international lending agencies, such as the World Bank, whose principal sponsor was America, and International Monetary Bank (IMF), and how the IMF prescribed financial reforms and forced the devaluation of the Philippine currency (151). As a result, as many as 1500 businesses went bankrupt and the poor masses suffered both unemployment and economic hardship (149 – 153). From the moment of its export reform announcement in 1981, the World Bank stipulated that the Philippines focus on apparel, electronics, shoes, and wood production. By 1984, however, garment export had plummeted, leading to a surge in unemployment in 1982 and 1983 (Broad 96, 223). These details, that is that the World Bank and the IMF made loans to the Philippines contingent upon a set of rules, point to how the Philippine economy was both held down by and continued to be dependent on the U.S. Meanwhile, the Marcoses had stashed away billions of stolen wealth in Swiss banks. After they fled Manila in 1986, the Philippine government has

As the title and subject matter of the chapter "Bananas and the Republic" indicates, Hagedorn is more than just casually concerned with capitalist modes of production. It is possible to read *Dogeaters* as a fictional critique of gender and economic issues in Metro Manila, a city that is arguably mapped through high fashion glitterati, film festivals, and beauty pageants. To complicate my analysis of Madame's extravagant clothing, I will extend her dressed body beyond spectacular consumption to include a consideration of the racial and gender constitution of the body. As Madame has been only too eager to point out, her clothes are locally manufactured. In an exclusive interview with Steve, "the foreign journalist," Madame declares herself to be "a nationalist when it comes to fashion" (217). Lifting one of her shoes, Madame announces: "Local made! You see, Steve—they say I only buy imported products. But look, *di ba*, my shoe has a label that clearly says: Marikina Shoes, Made in the PI!" (217). "And this beautiful dress I'm wearing," she continues, "is also local-made, out of pineapple fiber, which we also export. I use top Filipino designers exclusively for my clothes and shoes" (217). She elaborates on hers and her husband's "destinies": "Together we served our country, and together we sacrificed everything. We were chosen by God to guide and to serve—" (224). But her claim is hard to sustain once it is recognized that the signification of her wardrobe is constituted

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managed to recover US$590 million thus far ("That Elusive Marcos Money" 39 – 40).

through contradictory economic, military, political, and social forces. For those Filipino working bodies, such as cleaners, servants, and hospitality workers, whether they are serving American military personnel, tourists, the Alacrans, the Gonzaga clan, or Madame, these characters are afforded no material means for transforming their living conditions. I would add that dress is implicated in Madame's performative politics in which her clothing strategies become signifiers of power relations within the political and social context. The stark minimalism of the reporter's attire contrasts with Madame's luxury wardrobe and affection for style, whereby she "appraises and dismisses him swiftly, noting his hairy arms, cheap tie, limp white shirt, and dreary wing tips" (218). Madame's fashioning of herself and diminishing of the reporter after she sizes him up underwrite the fashioning and "systematic U.S. tutelage in the art," to borrow Oscar V. Campomanes' words, that already segregates her from both Filipinos and Americans and conveys the novel's larger critique of persistent social stratification and the excesses of state power ("The New Empire" 5). In the novel, it is what one wears and how one wears it, the dressed body, that determines her or his identity and social status. What the novel offers is a challenge to the corollary of what I would call colonial vestimentary uplift, which seeks to civilize the natives into respectability, and a gesture to the violence of inculcating Filipinos with the polite manners, refinement, and sensibilities of Western customs.

But before I investigate the benefits of civilization and American-centred epistemology that charts standardized ideals to be mimicked by Filipino women and men, I first need to mention briefly the interconnection between an American civilizing discourse linking moral superiority, hygiene, and health. Here I invoke the work of Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger* and Suellen Hoy's *Chasing Dirt: The American Pursuit of Cleanliness* in tracking America's emphasis on health consciousness, and, by extension, moral hygiene and fitness, power, and wealth of the nation, and the imposition of bodily hygiene among the influx of "unclean" immigrants transitioning into American society in the 1880s. "In chasing dirt, in papering, decorating, tidying," Douglas elucidates, "we are not governed by anxiety to escape disease, but are positively re-ordering our environment, making it conform to an idea" (3). Translated into the terms of *Dogeaters*, the investment in cleansing Metro Manila, in preparation for the Manila International Film Festival can be read as a historical reference to Americanization programs since the acquisition of the Philippines in 1898. Specifically, the cleansing of Metro Manila recalls the prescription of bodily discipline and hygienic practices by American civilizing and health educators on the Philippine populace as a way to enforce what Douglas characterizes as "good citizenship" (4). Here is an irony, since the Film Festival was primarily focused on pornographic films. "By 1910," Hoy writes, "Americanizers, one and all, had succeeded in making cleanliness a hallmark of being American" (121). Taking the civilizing purposes of hygiene and fitness as a departure, I want here to explore what critical purchase *Dogeaters* gains from articulating Madame's habits of dress and hygiene. Extending Hoy's discussion of cleanliness beyond the shores of the U.S. to the Philippines, I will historicize this condition to argue that the novel seeks to reconstitute a new mode of survival by remembering a matrix of political and medical forces regulated by a racial discourse on the Philippine population.

In "Cholera and the Origins of the American Sanitary Order," Reynaldo C. Ileto tracks the 1902 – 1904 cholera epidemic in conjunction with the 1899 – 1902 war of resistance, as well as the "pacification" of Filipinos in 1902 (53). Whereas American surgeons and sanitation engineers claimed "a sense of mission and righteous victory" over the cholera outbreak and viewed the installation of hygiene and preventive measures as "American heroism" and scientific progress, Ileto argues that American medical treatments, which were often administered by force, repulsed Filipino cholera patients (61, 53). In "'Where Every Prospect Pleases and Only Man is Vile': Laboratory Medicine as Colonial Discourse," Warwick Anderson contends that "American colonialism in the Philippines had rapidly been translated into the language of medical science" (83 – 84). With the suppression of the Filipino resistance in 1902, American government laboratories and surveillance operations moved into permanent sites, where officers studied tropical diseases and conducted experiments (84). Anderson notes that tropical science detected "the increased load of specific pathogens, the germs and parasites" that "were particularly associated with the 'unsanitary habits' of Filipinos" (99). Because Filipino bodies were classified as "hygienically degenerate types, requiring constant surveillance, instruction, and sometimes isolation," I suggest that *Dogeaters* enables us to remember the process of regulation and containment of the Philippine population, as well as the development of medical discourse, during the 1902 – 1904 cholera epidemic

(100). Hagedorn's citation of *Associated Press*'s "Insect Bounty" (1988), an article describing the filth and poor sanitary conditions in the slum district of Manila city, highlights the irony that underlies the American colonizing project of civilizing force and sanitation reconstruction of the Philippine citizen subject (187).

It is telling that *Dogeaters* alludes to Madame's "unnatural obsession with personal hygiene" as a historical reference to the process of Americanization and acceptance (134). Relating the hairdresser Chiquiting's stories about the First Lady, Joey Sands writes: "'Perfume here, there, and *there*—' Chiquiting smirks, pointing delicately to his crotch" (134). Lolita points out that Madame uses "custom-made perfume" to mask "her smell," giving an embellished account of Madame's "private perfume factory" (138). Andres Alacran adds, "She douses herself from head to toe" and "orders perfumes by the gallon" (140). In *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination*, Alain Corbin explains, after 1750, the use of "exciting perfumes" among the élite was "implicated in the criticism of luxury and artifice" (68). If the use of perfumes raises doubts about a person's bodily hygiene, as Corbin indicates, then Chiquiting's remark on Madame can be read as a gesture to the unrealized promises that haunt American educators' claim about cleanliness and superior civilization. There are echoes here of early twentieth-century American "institutionalized and bureaucratized" efforts at transforming hygiene into "a cultural value," a value that is "very American" (Hoy 121, 123). In keeping with the colonial pedagogical tenets of Americanization programs, Madame is, in a number of ways, a classic image of the Americanized extreme makeover. If dress and hygiene practices can be traced to pervasive fears of immigrants in nineteenth-century America, as Hoy describes, and seen as prerequisites for acceptance into U.S. society, *Dogeaters* foregrounds that which American civilizing reformers, social workers, and teachers cannot imagine—Madame's preoccupation with hygiene has both exceeded its function as a signifier of higher stage civilization, American manners, discipline, thrift, and habits of dress and devolved into a nightmare of excess and degeneracy.

Madame, who has in every way decked herself out in *terno* representing Philippine nationality, does not represent Filipino women. Rather, she is a figure that serves to shield, through her dressed body, the U.S. from the failure and violence of the American colonizing apparatus, even as she reveals that failure. It is this premise that *Dogeaters* highlights through the death of the construction workers, who were building Madame's "cultural center":

> The workers are busy day and night, trying to finish the complex for the film festival's opening night, which is scheduled in a few weeks. Toward the end, one of the structures collapses and lots of workers are buried in the rubble. . . . A special mass is held right there in Rizal Park, with everyone weeping and wailing over the rubble. The Archbishop gives his blessing, the First Lady blows her nose. She orders the survivors to continue building; more cement is poured over dead bodies; they finish exactly three hours before the first foreign film is scheduled to be shown. (130)

Historically and materially, Filipino labor has contributed to the construction and the sustaining of both the U.S. and the Philippines. If in the name of building a cultural complex such safety measures for the workers are flagrantly disregarded, what happens to the brutal impulses that have made the legitimization of negligence possible? This question offers a parallel to the central concern of my study: the violence of the history of U.S. imperialism cannot be safely contained within the folds of a national dress any longer. In spite of her trademark national costume, Madame continues to "see the world under western eyes" (357), as Seamus Deane would put it. If Madame's face maintains "a cordial mask" in an interview with the journalist, then her clothes reveal as much as they conceal the misery in the slums of Metro Manila (219). Neither can the U.S. mask and occlude the instrumentality of colonial reform and its vested interest in legitimatising its rule in the Philippines. The building disaster demonstrates the injury and loss of lives that result when Madame's "edifice complex" and beautification projects are actualized by means of what Andres describes as "flesh and blood" (134, 135). Significantly, the novel shows that dressing up Metro Manila with a new coat of paint, fake flowers, and new buildings has little to do with edifying the masses or improving the public good. Thus the narrative offers a resounding "no" to Madame's habits of dress and cleanliness: she exhibits little compunction about replicating American colonizing tactics, using the citizens' labor for her monuments but turning her back on the urban impurity of the everyday in Metro Manila; and she refracts the cruelty and affective investments, such as fear of and indifference to the masses in high-handed acts of authoritarianism, that overflow the legacy of U.S. colonialism and education.

In her investigation of one of the first American teachers to help install America as a legitimate ruling authority over the Philippines in 1901, Enloe draws attention to the significance and consequentiality of apparatuses of education and inculcation in "Victorian codes of feminine respectability" (48). While she notes that "the interventions of foreign corporations, bankers and armies" help organize nationalism in the contemporary context of decolonisation, the colonial standards of gender codes and values remain entrenched among Filipino women (45).[39] Through the figure of Madame, the novel intervenes into the distancing of a history of civilizing mission by laying bare its effects that still exist. The novel documents the rationale behind an American configuration of Filipinos as objects of salvation by citing President William McKinley's speech to "a delegation of Methodist Churchmen, 1898." Part of this address reads:

> we could not leave them to themselves—they were unfit for self-government—and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's was; …there was nothing left
> for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them. (71)

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[39] Enloe articulates the legacy of technologies of colonialism and the problem of nationalism: "Corazon Aquino became president of the Philippines on a wave of nationalism, but she herself is a graduate of an American college. Like many other Filipinos today, she remains torn between nationalist pride and an admiration for American values" (48). This explains Aquino's ardent support of the continued lease of Subic Bay Naval base and Clark Air Force base to America in 1991 (Witeck 9).

In another telling instance, the Episcopalian bishop Charles H. Brent mentions that "despite their 'awakening' by the United States they had yet to learn 'how to dress themselves'" (Karnow 212). Thus, although Madame's lavishly styled body reflects the superiority of the Western civilizing mission, the pleasure she takes in giving free rein to exorbitant wardrobe consumption aligns her body not with the sundered populations in Manila—the Filipino underclass—but with the excesses of the moneyed class. For Madame's sartorially progressive feminine body is a spectacle that ruptures the logic of clothing decorum where a visible, racialized body coalesces with the horror of excess presented by a materialized body refabricated in the U.S.'s image, even as she is complicit with the U.S. in matters economic, military, and political. If the U.S. is a site of enlightened knowledge and progressivism, then the very excesses of Madame's wardrobe call into question both the U.S.'s claims to its powers of institutionalized civilization and an Americanized pedagogy and values systems.

Sartorially charged with the political meanings and interests of the nation-state but also of neo-colonial power, the First Lady's clothes evacuate the material realities and the issues of uneven opportunity and power inequities that constellate around metro Manila. If the local and the global are mutually constitutive zones for theorizing politics and capitalism, then economic globalization is embedded in both the local and global. Implicit in the invisibility of Filipino seamstresses in the manufacturing of designer clothes is the logic of cheap female labor in the strategic geography of the Philippines that serves to raise questions about a collaboration between the global economic network and the Marcos government, a government that makes available legal and material infrastructure necessary to the management of global production and labor. Underlying the logic of the narrative is a critique of the mutually interimplicated systems of U.S. and Marcos governmental capitalist accumulation and control of profit. By constructing Madame as sartorially excessive and privileging her compulsive consumption of clothes and shoes, the narrative prompts us to consider how the control and exploitation of gendered labor in the apparel industry are elided. Madame's spectacle of vestimentary excess, including her ties to celebrity designers, works to resecure the overdetermined nexus of gender and class codes and, simultaneously, leaves unquestioned capitalism's labor practices and the matrix of exploitative relations of consumption and production.

Style and Power: Beauty Queens

In addition to such a reading of Madame's abundant material accoutrements, I would also suggest that her beauty and clothes are staged for the media and for political ends. Here, I consider women's agency, whether positive or exploitative, and their participation in beauty competitions and the institutionalization of ideal femininity and clothed identities. In *Women, Power, and Kinship Politics: Female Power in Post-War Philippines*, Mina Roces traces the gendering of power in the Philippines, positing that "women hold unofficial power as wives, sisters, mothers, daughters, and even mistresses of male politicians" (19). Roces takes issue with social scientists and historians who subscribe firmly to the notion that female power is absent in the Philippines political arena, asserting that women exert unofficial power as "active political agents" (2). Describing the roles of beauty contests in the Philippines, Roces states that the title of the beauty queen paves the way for political office, and female power (172). Roces writes that female candidates running for electoral office, or wives of candidates, are presented as "beauty queens or glamorous models" (169). She explains:

> It does not really matter whether the woman is in actual fact physically stunning; she can be reinvented as beautiful if she is a powerful woman who, in donning the outward trappings of fashionable dress, high heels, makeup, and manicured nails, conforms to the dictates of what is defined as beautiful by the most respected institution for measuring beauty: the beauty contest. (168 – 169)

Keeping in mind that women are active agents in their investment in beauty competitions and in their enactment of standard feminine identities, I suggest that a nuanced analysis of the link between beauty contests and female participants involves moving beyond viewing women as oppressed, tragic figures. If participation in beauty competitions is read as what Roces refers to as "political action," then the acquisition of beauty queen titles and investment in luxury attire actually underwrite a resolute, politically-driven upward socio-economic mobility and exercise of power for both Imelda Marcos and socially and politically ambitious women (8). Further, Roces's discussion of the ways beauty queens and swimsuit models mobilize their celebrity image is useful for examining the contingency of femininity and gender identity and for exploring how characters fashion their identities in the novel. In the narrative, both Madame and Isabel Alacron view dress and beauty contests as means to gain access to economic, political, and social privilege. Coming from a poor family, Isabel Alacran works as "a hostess at a nightclub" before being crowned "*Miss Postwar Manila*" and "*Miss Congeniality*" in beauty competitions (20). Winning these beauty titles opens up a way for her to become a movie starlet at Mabuhay Studios and, more importantly, to gain the attention of Severo Alacran. After her marriage to Alacran, Isabel, whose "role models" are "Dietrich, Vicomtesse Jacqueline de Ribes, Nefertiti, and Grace Kelly," simply "spends her time shopping for clothes" (20).

Not surprisingly, Imelda Marcos, Governor of Metro Manila and Minister of Human Settlements, won two beauty queen titles: the Rose of Tacloban in a local beauty competition in 1949, and Muse of Manila in a Miss Manila Contest in 1953 (Ellison 23, 32). Based on a case study of First Lady Imelda Marcos, who is touted as "Marcos's Secret Weapon in Diplomacy," and her use of unofficial power, Roces notes that Imelda Marcos visited U.S. Presidents Nixon, Carter, and Reagan, spoke to the United Nations, and took charge of diplomatic negotiations during the Marcos rule (48). Although the Philippines had been mired in debt to the International Monetary Fund and the World bank, Imelda Marcos managed to sign a U.S. $88 million loan agreement with the World Bank in 1977 (Bonner 250). Most importantly, Imelda Marcos gained political and monetary support from U.S. Presidents for the Marcos dictatorship (250). At stake here is an awareness of the power and presence of clothing in the politics of positioning, legitimatizing, and connecting bodies in social space.

The economic and social needs that are invested into dress and beauty can also provide one avenue through which Madame's *terno*-clad body and her spectacular wardrobe become imprinted in people's memories. The novel makes a list of Madame's achievements, which is worth quoting at length: "Queen of beauty queens, Miss Universal Universe, Miss *Bituin,* Madame Galactica, Madame International, *Maganda*, Pearl of the Orient, Pacific Rim Regina, Mother of Asia, Land of the Morning, Miss *Bahay Kubo*, Miss Manila, Lunaretta, Moonlight Sonata, *Binibining Pilipinas*, Jet-Set Ambassadress of *Adobo* and Goodwill" (218). These titles point to Madame's understanding of the opportunities that are available to beauty queens, and, by extension, of the spaces of power afforded to women through the dressed body. Like the cognate relation between beauty competitions and power, the novel suggests simultaneously the contingency of Filipino gender identities, and in so doing gestures to the ways dress such as swimsuits, *terno*, and shoes function instrumentally as a springboard for women to gain access to political power.

As First Lady, Madame is represented most fundamentally and visually by national costume. When women wear traditional dress, Elizabeth Wilson suggests in *Adorned in Dreams*, "they symbolize what is authentic, true to their own culture, in opposition to the cultural colonization of imperialism" (14). It is worth noting that there is much symmetry between Madame's and Imelda Marcos' *terno*-clad identity. The puffy-sleeved *terno* is a signifier of feminine national identity, which is in turn intertwined with complex configurations of power and authority. Like Madame's expensive indulgence in dress, the textual costuming in "The President's Wife Has a Dream" captures the colors and richness of fabrics on her body: "She is dressed in her lavender *terno*, the one with stiff butterfly sleeves intricately embroidered with sequined flowers" (121). And "in the lobby of the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City," Madame "wears a scarlet beaded silk *terno* an opulent black tulle bustle accentuates her plump buttocks as she struts confidently toward the elevators" (122). Meanwhile, her "entourage of crones dressed in pastel blue walk behind her at a respectful distance," as they "drag her luggage hundreds of Vuitton suitcases in all shapes and sizes" (122). The irony of Madame's over-identification with the national costume is that it conveys the incommensurability between her embodied identity and the masses. In *The Study of Dress History*, Lou Taylor explains that the "sources" of national dress are "urban, politicized, élitist and educated" and that such styles "are inevitably romanticizations" (213, 214). A fitting signifier of collective identity for formal occasions and the Malacañang Palace, the national dress excludes the soft underbelly of the Filipino economy such as the street cleaners who spruce up the image of the city for the Manila International Film Festival. This incommensurability is evident in the polarization between the *terno*-garbed Madame and the city workers: "She orders the city and slums rejuvenated with fresh coats of paint, windows and doorways lined with pots of plastic flowers, the streets swept and reswept by women in red and yellow sweatshirts with 'Metro Manila Aide' printed in big black letters on the back and front" (130).[40] In this scene, the narrative highlights the structuring polarity of First Lady/female cleaners' marginalization in nationalism and clothed identities in spaces of civility. A cleansed Metro Manila cleared of low inhabitants, whose "grotesque collective body," in Peter Stallybrass's and Allon White's words, "must be discharged elsewhere where it will not contaminate *culture*," is Madame's notion of the cultural sphere (93). From this, the narrative sets up an image of the Philippine nation set apart by the dichotomy of the social élite as active agents of the nation and the urban poor as subordinated labor of the nation.

Madame's sartorial notion of identifying with the people is, needless to say, the exact opposite of what the novel tells us.[41] As demonstrated in the Young Miss Philippines annual pageant, Madame's dress investment disavows critical engagement with the actual complexities of class division and metropolitan ghettoized communities. Held at the Magsaysay Pavilion, endorsed by the government, and organized by the First Lady, the annual pageant is visually incongruous in the midst of luminaries of high society and celebrities:

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[40] Neferti Xina M. Tadiar elaborates on Imelda Marcos' reasons for getting rid of MetroManila's "eyesores": "As 'the City of Man,' it was a representation of an enticing, tractable urban body ready to submit to foreign investments, a representation (and instrument) *of* and *for* the desires of international capital (12).

[41] In "Women, Citizenship and the Politics of Dress in Twentieth-Century Philippines," Mina Roces sees the *terno*-attired Imelda Marcos as "part of the First Family's agenda of pushing themselves as the legendary characters of Philippine folklore and as nationalist subjects." While Roces does not theorize the relationship between Imelda Marcos's embodied identity and the U.S., she does indicate that Imelda's "self-representation was not endorsed by local audiences" (www.cpcabrisbane.org?Kasama/2005/V19n1/PoliticsofDress.htm). It is interesting to note that even with the resistance against the Marcos dictatorship, Imelda Marcos has run for presidential elections in 1992 and 1998. She also managed to get elected to the House of Representatives in her home province of Leyte in 1995 (www.cnn.com/WORLD/9802/08/philippines.imelda/).

> Thousands of spectators jostle each other on the parched lawns of the public park at the bottom of the hill. The ubiquitous vendors in their torn *kamisetas,* short pants, and rubber thong slippers make their way expertly through the tight mass of people . . . . The non-paying public has stood in the unrelenting sun for hours to catch a glimpse of their idols, their movie stars, even the real *Macoy* himself and the First Lady." (103)

Contestants at the beauty contest wear signifiers of dress that supposedly enhance both their curvaceous bodies and their femininity, thereby representing an ideal gender and national identity, yet such clothing and images of gender make visible the cracks and fissures in the nation, as well as the exclusions arising from class and gender that are also part of Filipino identity.[42] By placing the shabbily dressed vendors against the spectacle of immaculately clothed honoured guests of the occasion, the novel reminds us the vendors are people situated in and dealing with the sustained alienation and oppression of their class identities. At the centre of this beauty pageant is Daisy herself, presented as a sign whose clothes and body stand for both the nation and the ideal woman. It is precisely the juxtaposition of class frictions and vestimentary excess, and of working-class bodies and highly styled bodies, that reinforces the contradictions of the event.

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[42] I find Stuart Hall's comments on the concept of nation instructive in making this connection between the larger body of nationhood and the dressed body. In "Whose Heritage? Un-Settling 'The Heritage,' Re-imagining the Post-nation," Hall writes: "What the nation 'means' is an on-going project, it is under constant reconstruction. We come to know its meaning partly *through* its objects and artefacts which have been made to stand for and symbolize its essential values. Its meaning is constructed *within*, not above or outside representation. It is through identifying with these representations that we come to be its 'subjects'—by 'subjecting' ourselves to its dominant meanings" (5).

Beauty pageants, for the Philippines, depend on the transmission of a marketable image of race and gender with what Walter Benjamin would term "aura" ("The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" 222). Whether they are clad in swimsuits or national costume, beauty contestants are meant to assume auratic values. Spending the day lounging around the pool at the country club, Pucha "thinks bathing suits have been created for the sole purpose of showing off her body" (60). Interestingly, then, Pucha's remark on the mutual implication between exhibitionism and bathing suits can be extended beyond the local swimming pool and into the global marketplace. My point is that swimwear signifiers must be understood in the context of the primacy of global marketing by the Philippine transnational tourist industry. Pucha's view condenses one of the key significations of swimsuits that are in tune with gender identity and goods production that are adumbrated in the novel. The importance of femininity, swimsuits, and auratic national costumes are crystallized in the Young Miss Philippines annual pageant in which Daisy Avila is one of the contestants. As the term "pageant" underscores some degree of dramatic visual display, pointing to how bodies and dress operate in a context of performativity, it is useful to consider the interconnection between bathing suits and beauty pageants in light of their historical and commercial specificities. Beauty pageants are especially congruent with swimsuits for they have been primarily connected to imperatives of advertising, that is, marketing consumer products, women, and femininity. For the beauty queen competition, Daisy "parades up and down the runway in a modest bathing suit," drawing attention to the ways beauty contestants must conform to the representation of the ideal beauty queen in swimsuits in a competitive display that sanctions the panel of judges' as well as the public's gaze on her (102). It is worth noting in this context that the novel raises questions about the economic and cultural significance of bathing suits, which have become interwoven with local and international beauty pageants that drive capitalist production. More than a global spectacle circulating and marketing images of local cultures that include contestants dressing up in their national costumes and swimsuits, the Miss Universe pageant, for example, is connected to larger American processes of transnational capitalism.

The Miss Universe competition was set up in 1952 by Pacific Mills, a California clothing company that was to become part of Kayser-Roth and then Gulf & Western Industries, to display its *Catalina Swimwear* brand.[43] Beauty contestants in such a commercial-laden context serve as models to show off both their national costumes and swimsuits. The business of standard feminine identity and representation of women extends to a range of industries such as clothing and cosmetics. Gender ideology is germane here inasmuch as these beauty contests depend upon participants' willing acquiescence to normalizing practices, such as bodily discipline and wardrobe sensibility, that fulfill the standards of gender and beauty. At stake is the mobilization of the beauty pageant as a site for the problematic circulation of essentialized, immutable gendered identities in the interests of capitalist accumulation. To understand the swimsuit-beauty contest-tourism nexus, it might be useful to recall the period in the late 1950s in which the U.S. Department of Commerce recognized the geopolitical benefits of leisure and tourism. In *Sex, Money and Morality: Prostitution and Tourism in Southeast Asia*, Thanh-Dam Truong posits an interconnection between tourism and the traffic in women. According to Truong, as early as 1958, the U.S. became interested in establishing an international tourist industry in Third World countries as a way to contain political tensions and pressure from banking institutions involved in aeronautical manufacturing. At the signing of the International Travel Act in 1961 and the establishment of the first U.S. Travel Service Office, John F. Kennedy proclaimed the educational value of tourism in promoting international understanding and world peace (115 – 122). By 1979, the incorporation of tourism into the "New International Economic Order," that is, the linkage between tourism and development economics," was fully underway (117). Yet, Kennedy's declaration of tourism as educational also masks American economic and geopolitical interests in the Third World, such as economic dependence on American capital investment, geographical diversification of transnational production sites, and the continuance of U.S. influence and military presence.

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[43] *Catalina* also founded Miss America Pageant, Miss USA, and Miss Teen USA. To market its swimwear, *Catalina* engaged Hollywood stars like Ronald Reagan and Marilyn Monroe to model for its product lines (*In an Influential Fashion* 55). In 1996, Donald Trump acquired ownership of the Miss Universe Pageant, whose offices are located in New York (Miss Universe®: History). Established in 1951 by Eric Morley in the United Kingdom, the Miss World pageant originated as a "Festival Bikini Contest," a marketing strategy to promote a brand of swimwear (History of the MWO).

Under the Marcos regime, Truong argues, the government officially "made explicit that female sexuality was to be regarded as an economic asset in their tourist ventures for national development" (128).

Winners of the Miss Philippines pageant get to participate in international beauty contests such as the prestigious Miss Universe, Miss World, and Miss International.[44] Moving to the broader geopolitical utility of beauty competitions, Candace Savage explains, in *Beauty Queens: A Playful History*, that beauty queens from developing countries serve to "provide a focus for national togetherness" and promote tourism (117). Thus these international beauty competitions work as a site where bodies are put on public display and marked by genderized, nationalist discourses. It is particularly arresting to note that the Philippine beauty contestants were semi-finalists of the Miss World competition in the early 1970s, so that Imelda Marcos's campaign to hold a beauty pageant in the Philippines can be read as coming hot on the heels (no pun intended) of

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[44] Miss Universe is an international spectacle telecast to the global marketplace. Yet, the victory also stages Filipino identity as exotic spectacle and object of consumption.
"Binibining Pilipinas" or Miss Philippines is the most prestigious beauty contest in the Philippines. In 1969 and 1973, winners of this contest won the Miss Universe title, and in 1994, Miss Philippines won the Best National Costume in the Miss Universe Pageant. As well, Miss Philippines won the most original formal gown in 1971 (*Miss Universe®: History*). Started in Long Beach, California, in 1960 and now based in Japan, the Miss International Beauty Pageant is another event that awards the Miss National Costume title to the "delegate who makes the best presentation in her national costume" (miss-international.org). The Philippines has captured the title of Miss International in 1964, 1970, and 1979. So far Philippines has not won the title of Miss World, though several Philippine contestants were semi-finalists or runners-up in 1968, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1986, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2002, 2003, and 2004. In 1971, Miss Philippines won the title of "Most Original Formal Gown," and in 1986, 1993, and 2004, won the title of Asian and Oceania Queen of Beauty in the Miss World pageants (History of MWO).

Philippine beauty contestants winning a victory in international pageants for consecutive years. In addition, she is globalizing the local, that is, the state of to-be-looked-at beautiful Philippine women clad in swimsuits, and marketing an alluring commodity, in order to promote tourism and exotic desire. I suggest the extent of Imelda Marcos's running the beauty contests is apparent in her lobbying to have Manila play host to the Miss Universe Pageant in 1974, a spectacle that is parlayed into global commerciality and commodification of images of national dress that marks and exoticizes Filipino women (Romulo 98).

Feminist Awakening and Redressing Gender

But the novel goes further to develop the display of clothes and performance of gendered roles on the public stage of the Young Miss Philippines annual pageant. In contradistinction to "the preening First Lady" sitting in the VIP section, Daisy's muted clothing underwrites the incommensurability of dress, which constitutes part of the ritual drama of the competition, and a single coherent representation of Filipino gender identity (102). While the judges evaluate the contestants' bodies and clothes, the novel critiques dress and its connotations of class and power, and also questions the adequacy of the images of beauty queens as symbols of Filipina identity. In the chapter "Breaking Spells," Daisy is awake to the systemic expectations and ironies posed by the gendered embodied identities of beauty contestants and to how contingent and staged the feminized body is. Daisy's rising above self-interest—that is above the benefits that accrue to and the desirability of the beauty queen title—can be read as a feminist rebirth that both provides a snapshot of the re-burgeoning feminist nationalism during the Marcos dictatorship and offers an alternative to established representations of women.[45] Cora Camacho, host of *At Home with a Beauty Queen*, intends to secure a major scoop and "promises an intimate look at Daisy's life, loves, and wardrobe," whereas Daisy uses the live television special to "publicly denounce the beauty pageant as a farce, a giant step backward for all women" (109).[46] Enmeshed in economic imperatives, the beauty pageant operates to categorize and classify female dressed bodies around the world as representative of racial and gender difference for local and global consumption. Speaking against her knowledge of television's panoptic power, Daisy demonstrates that the pageant, a regulatory and normative authority, inscribes the ideals of racialized femininity on the female body. When Daisy "accuses the First Lady of furthering the cause of female delusions in the Philippines," the segment is censored (109).[47] Besides making explicit the ways that the First Lady is complicit in legitimitizing how female bodies are made both to follow the dress code and bear feminine poses, Daisy's intervention in the beauty contest is also an opposition to Madame's fabricated nationalist costume and ostentatious feminine registers of style. Beyond the retelling of a standard beauty pageant, the novel uses the event as a critical strategy that explores the interlocking network of embodiment and the citationality of a sedimented history of gender codes. Judith Butler's critique of gender as a fixed identity in *Gender Trouble* is instructive here:

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[45] "Breaking Spells" is contemporaneous with a resurgence of women political activism in the Philippines. For example, MAKIBAKA, the Free Movement of New Women, a militant feminist group, grappled with gender and human rights issues, as well as protested against a Miss Philippines beauty competition in April, 1970 (Kwiatkowski and West 152). Founded in 1970 and forced underground by Martial Law in 1972, MAKIBAKA was declared illegal by Marcos, who decreed that its members be arrested. See Judy M. Taguiwalo, "The Women of the First Quarter Storm of 1970: Women 'Fully Engaged in the Making of History,'" Conf. on Filipino-Canadian Youth Looking at the Past for the Future. Vancouver, BC. 24 – 26 Nov. 2005. <http://www.defendsison.be/pages_php/0511240.php>

[46] Daisy's character invokes the beauty queens who joined the anti-Marcos movement shortly after winning their titles as she does in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Cora Camacho's character is based on actual talk-show hosts Elvira Manahan and Inday Badiday (Evangelista 51).

[47] Yet this censored live televised scene in the novel represents only one particular history of silencing and suppression of speech of the time. Ferdinand Marcos imposed martial law in 1972 alongside "shutting down all newspapers

> gender identity is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. (179)

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and reopening them slowly with strict government censorship, prohibiting all street demonstrations and political rallies" (*Neocolonialism American Style* 135). Although Marcos lifts martial law in 1981, he passes a legislation that guarantees the execution of his powers. In "Women as Warriors: The Philippine Revolutionary Context," John Witeck has described how both the Philippine and the U.S. governments have refused to grant human rights protection to women activists under the pretext that they cannot help women who are categorized as "terrorists" (17). *Dogeaters* reworks this legitimated military violence in the chapter "The Famine of Dreams," in which Daisy is arrested by Colonel Jesus de Jesus and sent to Camp Meditation, where she is assaulted (211 – 216). In contradistinction to hegemonic narratives of national events, the novel offers two narratives side by side within a chapter—an episode of the Tagalog melodrama *Love Letters* is intercut with scenes of Daisy's kidnapping and torture—textual narrativity that indicates how telenovela and real events are carefully staged. Here Hagedorn challenges us to question the rhetoric of official truth and fiction, that is, the simulation and proliferation of spectacular images and official coverage of real events in media representation in order to move toward freedom and justice.

Following Butler, I suggest that gender in the novel is made culturally intelligible via the repetitive stylization of the body, producing a unified image of femininity and simultaneously showing it to be an effect of performative features of identity. As well, the slippage between Madame's and Daisy's performance renders gender unstable. Yet, while Daisy goes through the scripted beauty contest's protocol and wins the crown, the gender and national signification she bears is rendered unstable when she joins the insurgents and sabotages the dress decorum of her class by donning guerrilla outfits. When Joey Sands meets Daisy and her "comrades" in the mountains, they are attired "in drab colors," which register as a form of drag juxtaposed with Madame's *terno*, a feminine spectacle in flamboyant colors (232). In thus wearing this nondescript attire, Daisy and the insurgents are engaged in cultural and political resistance in two ways. First, the drabness of the insurgent uniform functions as a tactic, an undressing process, to disrupt the artifice and colorful sartorial image of Madame, including the pageantry of beauty contests, and all the trappings of power the Marcoses enjoy. Second, the drab clothing signifies the seriousness of a revolution to overthrow what Michel Foucault refers to as "tactics of governmentality" ("Governmentality" 103).[48] As signifiers of political struggles, Daisy's and her comrades' attire is set in stark contrast to the state law enforcement officers' "khaki pants and shirts, outfits busy with significant trimmings and insignia," as well as General Nicasio V. Ledesma's "camouflage fatigues and combat boots" (168, 125). Abdicating all responsibility for and expectations of a feminine sartorial nationalist identity, Daisy consciously rejects and throws into disarray the figure of the beauty queen as body of the nation, as bearing the burden of representation, and as keeper of fixed cultural tradition for an audience. In this, the novel shows that Daisy's body, whether it be clothed in national dress, swimsuit, or combat attire, can be resignified. The subversive potential in Daisy's epiphanic transformation lies in the threat posed by signifiers of insurgent attire, which exceed and pervert the boundaries of class and gender decorum.

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[48] In his study of government, Foucault demonstrates that governmentality evolved from "the archaic model of Christian pastoral" and "a diplomatic-military technique" (104). He identifies the pastoral, the diplomatic-military techniques, and police as the three components that produced "the governmentalization of the state" that first appeared in eighteenth-century Western history (103 – 104). Foucault's work on police government and the moral ambivalences of the police state has been helpful in my reading of the Marcos government and my formulation of these arguments.

Conclusion

I have examined the interconnection between dress habits and the production of political subjects and identities, not only to think through how *Dogeaters* intervenes into the rhetoric of the American Dream and the inculcation of American civilizing ideals as twin forces of the U.S. imperialism in the Philippines, but also to attend to the perpetration of class divisions and inequalities made evident through the various plotlines and characters. While the Euro-American gender ideal extends beyond the U.S.' national borders, the novel challenges the teleological narrative of American cultivation and militates against the U.S. as a global force and international authority in its interarticulations of dress and subjectivity. In its portrayal of the dominant influence of an American embodied ideal and self-actualizing identities, the novel engages in a struggle between the exigency of political resistance and social justice and the reinforcement of an over-determined representation of Philippine characters.

In order to address these issues they need first to be contextualized within the broader history of an American colonial mission in the Philippines over the last hundred years. This chapter formulates an understanding of dress signification that refuses to see U.S. colonization and neocolonization of the Philippines as static or monolithic. I identify dress as a narrative device and locate several interconnected and contradictory ways in which a story is articulated, disseminated, and engaged critically through the narrators. First, we see dress as a colonial tool of regulation and hygiene control and as a neo-colonial tool of domination in the postindependence Philippines, as evident in Madame. Dress also circulates as self-discipline and labour in service of larger interests, not one's individual's desires only, such as for Dolores, Trinidad, Nena, and Ana. Even so, dress enables the possibility of increased social capital and mobility, as well as access to imagined freedoms, as it does for Lolita, Romeo, and Trinidad. Dress clearly also operates as a signifier of gender and nationalism, materialized via performativity, specifically in beauty contests and the tourism industry, as evident in Daisy's and Isabel Alacran's narratives. Yet even as dress is a nationalist signifier, it also works as the circuit of mediation and transformation of identity, as well as dismantles the assumed singularity of American authenticity, as we see for Panchito, Madame, and Oscar de la Renta. Finally, dress is a tool of disidentification and a condition of transversality, as registered in Daisy's narrative. Mieke Bal states that "the narrative text constitutes a whole, into which, from the narrator's text, other texts may be embedded" (142 – 143). So, here, the primary narrative of *Dogeaters* presents the vignettes of cosmopolitan Manila, and dress functions as the embedded text of histories that are otherwise erased, forgotten, or fabricated. By analyzing how the novel deploys the signification or oversignification of dress in its representation of the characters, I argue that it puts Philippine society, subjectivity, and the Marcos government and its dependency on and relations with the U.S. under close scrutiny. Furthermore, in the insistent, recurrent invocation of imitation and original, the novel asks the question, what exactly is meant by "American"?

Self-fashioning through the consumption and mimesis of designer clothing is tied to social mobility and staking particular political claims. *Dogeaters* is important because it gives us a sense of the intensity with which the mobilization and reconstitution of clothing signifiers (re)shapes and undermines existing codes of gender and social hierarchies. It is useful to read the novel as significantly interested in the late-Marcos era because the narrative raises concerns which intersect with Imelda Marcos, not the least of which are the ways her dressed body figured as spectacle and meant business, quite literally. But the novel is also concerned with the ways in which the signifiers of dress bring to bear the contradictions and the competing investments of the characters as well as the nation state and U.S. imperialism. In its attentiveness to dress as signifiers of identities, the novel foregrounds the ways in which Madame's mediated body fails to cloak the violence of institutionalized civilization and the spirit of benevolent reform administered to and for the edification of Filipino bodies considered inferior. Considering the instrumental complexities of politics between the Reagan and Marcos governments, it should not be surprising that the Marcoses were flown by U.S. airforce plane, supplied courtesy of the Reagan administration, to their exile in Hawaii in 1986. The textual representation of Madame's wardrobe excess is also evidence of Hagedorn's critique of the violence and corruption of the Marcos governmentality, which was supported by the U.S. and, in some ways, conceived in and through the U.S.'s imperial and capitalistic interests in the Philippines. By donning guerrilla outfits, Daisy Avila mobilizes the signifiers of dress to disrupt the social and disciplinary order on which the Marcos authoritarian regime keeps a tight rein. Reverberating through the novel are concerns for a gender-specific class of labor, a hierarchical politics of class and gender, and an Americanized Filipino consciousness that reverberate through the novel, and that require a reassessment of the complex relationship between signifiers of dress and identities. I suggest that Hagedorn puts the semiotics of dress on a proper footing, taking fashion and clothes seriously as a powerful force in which class, gender, and race identities are (re)styled and experienced in everyday life.

Chapter Two

“Royal representatives of our school”: Technologies of Dress in Mavis Hara’s “Carnival Queen”

In 1907, when Honolulu High School shifted to the corner of Beretania and Victoria Streets, it changed its name to President William McKinley High School in honour of President William McKinley, “whose influence helped bring annexation to the Hawaiian Islands to the United States.” A bronze statue of President William McKinley was commissioned to the tune of US$8000, and the completed statue was shipped from New York to Honolulu and dedicated to President McKinley on February 23, 1911.[1] Also known as “Tokyo High” because of a large cohort of Japanese American students, William McKinley High School is one of the oldest and most established co-educational secondary schools in Hawaii. Renowned for its academic distinction and high standard of student behaviour, McKinley High School is the setting of Mavis Hara's "Carnival Queen" (1991). But what happens when William McKinley High School is invoked not for the usual round of accolades devoted to the former President but for confronting the democratic ideals of national identity? What is at stake when Hara sets her story in 1966?

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[1] For an informative feature story of McKinley High School and its achievements written by its teachers, see “McKinley High School 140-Year Birthday” (http://www.mckinleyfoundation.com/feature.htm); and for a history of the President McKinley High School, see the school’s homepage, <http://www.mckinley.k12.hi.us/history.php>. According to Christine R. Yano, both McKinley High School and the University of Hawaii hosted their own “rainbow pageants,” which “crowned several queens in separate ethnic categories” in postwar Hawaii (60). Yano elaborates: “In the 1940s, the McKinley High School Carnival Queen contest received media coverage in the daily English-language newspapers; Japanese-language newspapers also ran special features on the winner of the Japanese Carnival Queen. Compared to other ‘rainbow pageants’ at the university level, the McKinley High School one was an inclusive, common people’s event” (60 – 61). What is at stake in Hara’s “Carnival Queen,” in distinction from Yano’s description of the McKinley High School Carnival Queen contest as a “rainbow pageant” in the 1940s and 1950s, is not so much the “inclusive[ness]” as the conundrum that lies at the heart of the beauty competition in 1966, the interface between multiculturalism and the crowning of an ideal U.S. citizen.

Set in McKinley High School, "Carnival Queen" is a coming-of-age story narrated by Sam, who, together with Terry and the other teenage contenders, must learn personal hygiene and grooming skills that help them pass the prerequisites of the 1966 Carnival Queen contest. Besides the beauty contest, the fair includes a starch-throwing booth and game booths with prizes. Sam and Terry became fast friends when they were elected as senior class officers and, subsequently, wound up participating in the annual Carnival Queen competition. Boys hold office as president and vice-president, and Sam and Terry are the only girls elected as secretary and treasurer respectively. As the contestants get closer to the Carnival Queen event, they go through the motions of skin cleansing and deportment sessions, and Sam articulates her conflicted feelings about her identification with Eurocentric standards of beauty. Soon afterwards, Terry decides not to compete in the beauty contest, and explains to Sam the fallibility beneath the beauty contest. In a show of support for Terry, Sam also backs out, feeling relief that she will not have to wear "gecko eye make-up" (343). Following the dramatic crowning of the Carnival Queen and her Princesses at the carnival fair, the story ends with the students throwing cups of starch at the teachers and the school principal. In the aftermath of the beauty contest, Terry brings a sense of urgency in repudiating the stereotypes of the ideal Carnival Queen when she says to the narrator Sam, "Thanks for quitting with me" (349). Throughout Sam's narration, her conscious comparison of the whiteness and beauty of Terry and Leilani Jones or Lani, a hapa,[2] bespeaks her feelings of exclusion and rejection. Using the central narrating voice of Sam, Hara turns the beauty contest inside out and suggests a rethinking of the unquestioned categories of nationally valorized, idealized gender identity in terms of the racial and social relations they help to sustain. Hara literalizes the psychic violence done to the beauty contestants, which crystallizes when some of the girls have to scotch-tape their eyelids. This figuration of the Carnival Queen beauty contestant relies on historically embedded physical indices of a desired ideality.

Hara's text is set in Hawaii in 1966, in the wake of the civil rights movement, and harkens back to the political history of Asian American identity in the late 1960s, the moment when "distinct Asian ethnic groups, primarily Chinese, Japanese, Filipino and Korean Americans, began to frame and assert their 'common identity' as Asian Americans" (Omi 17). Since the early 1990s onwards, however, Asian American panethnicity, an identity based on dominant society's victimization of Asian Americans, has met with several challenges on both the mainland and in Hawaii.[3] More so than anything, "Carnival Queen" insists that Asian American characters' struggle against the ambivalent, paradoxical ideological construct of the model minority stereotype remains an urgent task, reasserting what Michael Omi and Howard Winant emphasize as the "continuing significance and changing meaning of race" (200). From the beginning, the narrative is marked by numerous references to the body and dress habits. Dress is a means for Sam to unfold the story of aspiring young female students attempting to display ideal American gender citizenship by undertaking the arduous task of cosmetic makeovers, thereby taking us behind the scenes of the McKinley High School Carnival Queen contest that is otherwise unavailable to us. But dress is not simply a narrative device that drives the action of "Carnival Queen." Dress and dress habits function as a site of remembering the Yellow Peril discourse and interrogating the notion of mainstream U.S. citizenship and national belonging.

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[2] The term "hapa" or "hapa haole" refers to one who is part Asian or Pacific Islander and part Caucasian, and the term "haole" describes one who is Caucasian. In *Institutional Racism: The Case of Hawai`i,* Michael Haas writes that "haole" is a term that refers to "those who could not speak the Hawaiian language but soon became equated with Whites of European ancestry" (4). I am aware of an ongoing debate in website forums that centres on the appropriation of the term "Hawaiian hapa." Whereas "Hapa Issues Forum," a San Francisco-based organization, uses the term "hapa" to represent "an Asian Pacific Islander of mixed heritage," "Real Hapas" points out that many mixed Asians culturally appropriated the Native Hawaiian term to mean "mixed Asian or Pacific Islander"; see "Hapa Issues Forum" (http://www.hif.org/about_hif/index.html) and "Real Hapas" (http://www.realhapas.com).

I choose this particular story to rethink the ideological conception of a particular feminine beauty ideal because it rejects an easy solution to questions surrounding the correlation between beauty queen, ideal gender, and national identity, even as it intervenes these issues. Specifically, the beauty pageant constitutes a narrative representation of national identity formation at work in the narrator's high school. Since the late 1990s, a body of scholarship on beauty pageants based on fieldwork and many revealing interviews has emerged.[4] While scholars have undertaken thoughtful investigations of beauty contests, I will focus on the semiotics of dress in Mavis's Hara's "Carnival Queen." No extended critical analysis has been done on signifiers of dress in beauty contests, and little scholarship exists on the representations of dress and Asian American beauty contestants in literature. My analysis shifts the emphasis from an ethnographic account of beauty contests per se to focus on how signifiers of dress enable new thinking about the interconnections between images and a politics of beauty and gender.[5] I am particularly interested in dress as a signifier of identities, remembering, and the possibility of resistance and intervention during a period of political activism and changing demographics in Hawaii. As a narrative device in "Carnival Queen," dress functions to render visible how the Carnival Queen is a social apparatus of power, an instrument of representation and of national belonging. I focus on Hara's "Carnival Queen" because it rescripts the Carnival Queen beauty contest by incorporating signifiers of dress to suit its critical intervention and to call into question the very foundations of beauty competition, and hence, by extension, the notion of the multicultural nation. As the Japanese American characters in the story come under pressure from teachers and parents to undergo strenuous, extreme makeover sessions, they understand perfectly how their mimicry of the model minority stereotype and ideals of gender and whiteness afford them an opportunity to get crowned as Carnival Queen. Underscoring the problematic nature of the beauty contest at McKinley High, the carnivalesque ending gestures to the narrative's prospect for feminist sorority as a possibility for informed citizenship and change.

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[3] Examples of conflicts between Asian Americans and other ethnic groups on the mainland and in Hawaii are: the Native Hawaiians have been seeking restitution of the territory belonging to the Hawaiian nation and voicing their objections to what Candice Fujikane terms "Asian settler colonialism in Hawaii"; and the 1992 Los Angeles civil riots; see Candice Fujikane, "Whose Vision: Asian Settler Colonialism in Hawai`i," Spec. issue of *Amerasia Journal* 26.2 (2000): xv – xxii; and Richard Chang, "Why We Need a Critical Asian American Legal Studies," *Asian American Studies: A Reader*. Ed. Jean Yu-wen Shen Wu and Min Song (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2000) 373 - 378.

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[4] Examples of this emerging body of work evaluating beauty competitions based on ethnographic research are: Colleen Ballerino Cohen, Richard Wilk, and Beverly Stoeltje, eds. "Introduction: Beauty Queens on the Global Stage." *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage: Gender, Contests, and Power*, (New York: Routledge, 1996), 1 – 11; Alexander Watson and Darcy Martin, eds. "*There She Is, Miss America: The Politics of Sex, Beauty, and Race in America's Most Famous Pageant*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Maxine Leeds Craig, *Aint't I a Beauty Queen? Black Women, Beauty, and the Politics of Race*, (New York: Oxford UP, 2002); and Karen W. Tice, "Queens of Academe: Campus Beauty Pageantry and Student Life," (*Feminist Studies* 31.2 (Summer 2005): 250 – 283). *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage*, in particular, carries a wide range of essays that explore the nuances of beauty contests within diverse geographic and historical contexts. For an examination of race, gender, and citizenship, see Anne Anlin Cheng, "Beauty and Ideal Citizenship: Inventing Asian America in Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Flower Drum Song* (1961)," *The Melancholy of Race* (New York: Oxford UP, 2000), 31 – 63.

[5] In "World Fashion, Ethnic, and National Dress," Joanne B. Eicher and Barbara Sumberg provide useful definitions for dress, clothing, and fashion. Whereas clothing is understood as apparel, dress is defined as "an assemblage of

In this chapter, I will begin with a condensed history of the Americanization of Hawaii, focusing on Asian Americans and the internalization of identities through popular culture, a discursive site of knowledge and power. Given that beauty competitions in America have a long history, a brief survey of their origins and development holds several implications for how to read the

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modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body" (298). Eicher and Sumberg state that "dressing the body" can include a range of products that "stimulate" the five senses (298 – 299). They view fashion as "a process involving change," adding that "awareness of change within one's lifetime is a requisite aspect of fashion" (299).

deployment of dress signifiers in Hara's narrative as a strategy for interrogating social hierarchies and the racial and gender identities that comprise them. According to Rodney Morales, the emergence of the field of ethnic and black studies across the mainland United States also influenced the local literary community in Hawaii "to assert itself culturally" in 1978.[6] I situate my analysis of "Carnival Queen" in the 1960s, a politically-charged period which set in motion a reexamination of racial meanings, material practices, and representations of gender, including: the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the radicalization of civil rights in 1966 and the corollary theme of "Black is Beautiful," the conception of the Asian American model minority in 1966, the first year in which the Miss America Pageant is televised in colour on NBC in 1966, and the protest against the prestigious 1968 Miss America beauty pageant on the Boardwalk in Atlantic City.

By attending to the interconnection between dress and an American ideal of beauty in Hara's story, I argue that it confronts head-on the competing expectations and conflicting positions of Asian American characters in relation to the processes of identity and nation formation. While Hara's text demonstrates the difficulties and limits of intervening into the established norms of beauty, and by extension, model citizen of the nation, it underscores the urgent need for contesting disciplinary subject formation. I want to delineate a cultural-historical contextualization of the concept of the beauty queen and embodied identities, drawing attention to the ways in which the American ideal of a beauty icon in Hawaii at a particular moment continued to reconfigure itself, that is, how it has subverted and survived the winds of change. My analysis also considers the specificity of gender construction in relation to the sartorial and feminine identities of Hollywood screen icons and reconsiders the complexities and contradictions of negotiating identities for Japanese Americans in Honolulu. Following this contextualizing work and the critical reading it makes possible, I will extend Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of carnival in *Rabelais and His World* to discuss how the collective celebration of crowning the queen and princesses in Hara's text, a feminist recasting of the carnival queen contest, participates in the subversion and textual overthrow of oppressive, established hierarchical structures and ideals of gender and race. The carnivalization of the Carnival Queen contest offers the narrator an opportunity to speak out against both the grandiose sweeps of the beauty competition and the installation of a cross-over beauty icon, whose picture is hung on the hallowed walls of McKinley High's auditorium corridor. I do not suggest that Hara's narrative effectively overturns race, gender, and class structures, but rather that it reverberates with textual echoes of a carnivalesque liberation from the oppression of race and gender.

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[6] For a detailed account of a "native Hawaiian Renaissance," see Stephen H. Sumida's "Hawaii's Local Literary Tradition: 'To Speak of Things So Real,'" in *And the View from the Shore*, in which he argues that "the 'silence' of Hawaii's people may not always be a matter of their voices being stifled or stolen, but rather of simply not being heard" (235). Sumida adds that Hawaii's twentieth-century Asian American literature had been "ignored" and attributes the inaugural 1978 "Talk Story: Our Voices in Literature and Song; Hawaii's Ethnic American Writers' Conference" of Local and mainland Asian/Pacific American literatures in Hawaii to crystallizing a "genuine multicultural literature of Hawai'i" (235, 238, 239).

Finally, I end with a discussion of assimilation as a constitutive dimension of the model-minority stereotype. Specifically, Hara adopts the voice of Terry to insist on questioning the processes that fashioned received notions of an idealized citizenship in the racial imaginary. Even as the story is structured through the narrator Sam's point of view, it presents a complex of refractions through a specific agent like Terry, and tracks the ways in which Sam and the Japanese American contestants such as Linda, Trudye, and the Yanagawa twins have internalized regulating ideals of womanhood. Because of this immediacy, that is, we witness a series of events through Sam's eyes and we see through her, we are cognizant of her identification with Hollywood icons, her self-consciousness, and her contradictory desires of national acceptance and autonomy. Drawing parallels between the making up of a beauty queen and helping the girls "pass" for Princesses and the interpellating of U.S. subjects, Sam's narrative can be read as an intervention into the national narrative—the production of citizen-subjects and the making of a nation through disciplinary technologies of power. As Lisa Lowe points out, "the terrain of multiculturalism is both a mode of pluralist containment and a vehicle for intervention in that containment" (85). With this in mind, I suggest that "Carnival Queen" rejoins texts such as Edward Iwata's "Race Without Face" (1991) and Lois-Ann Yamanaka's "When Asian Eyes are Smiling" (1997) within which the narrators articulate self-consciousness of their face, their appearance, and question the incommensurability of multiculturalism and the work of material apparatuses in forming the citizen-subject.

U.S. Imperialism in Hawaii

To lay the groundwork for this textual analysis, I begin by placing the story within the context of U.S. politics and institutions in Hawaii. The interlocking connections between the land tenure system, plantation economy, and an Asian immigrant contract labor system in Hawaii offer insights into the emergence of local culture.[7] The history of Hawaii and Western contact goes back to the eighteenth century, when Hawaii served as a port for Europeans trading in the South Pacific. Trade and commerce interaction between Hawaiians and Europeans started in 1778 with the arrival of James Cook, and shortly thereafter accelerated around 1815. In "Land Tenure in Hawaii," Marion Kelly documents the disparity between Native Hawaiians with their traditional Hawaiian culture and European traders, noting that the American, French, and British had sent warships and gunboats to the Islands in 1836 in struggles over a trade monopoly. Kelly maps the displacement of the Hawaiian people and charts the conditions of the emergence of missionaries, who arrived in 1820, in the Hawaiian government. These missionaries formed the core vanguard in restructuring the Hawaiian government in 1845 (59 – 61). The nature and terms of land and property rights took a drastic turn with the issuance of a series of legal acts: in 1848 the king divided the lands into Crown Lands and Government Lands, and by 1886, foreigners secured ownership of two-thirds of the government-allotted land (Kelly 69 – 71). The commodification of land, the recruitment of immigrant labor for the plantation system, and the imposition of U.S. culture and traditions all threw into disarray the entire Hawaiian social structure.

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[7] I understand that the category "Asian American" is inadequate in articulating the complexity and heterogeneity of Asian American groups. According to the U.S. Bureau of the 1990 and 2000 Census, Hawaii, California, New York, Washington, and Illinois had the largest Japanese American population, a settlement pattern rather similar to the pre-1965 immigration period. Both the 1980 and 1990 U.S. Census classified Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders—Fijians, Guamians, Hawaiians, Micronesians, and Samoans—in the same racial category. In the 2000 U.S. Census, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders were classified under separate groups. Pacific Islander groups include Hawaiians, Guamanians, Samoans, Tongans, and Fijians, with Native Hawaiians comprising half of the Pacific Islander population. My contextualization of how Hawaii becomes an American state, Hawaiian plantations, and the Hawaiian public education system is informed by and synthesizes a wide array of texts: Gary Y. Okihiro, *Cane Fires: Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865 – 1945* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1991); Eileen H. Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity: The Nisei Generation in Hawaii*, (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1994); and Elizabeth Bentzel Buck, *Paradise Remade: The Politics of Culture and History in Hawaii* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1993). Buck's discussion of the historical forces and particular forms of representation, such as music, that produce and make use of cultural identity in Hawaii is insightful.

Before American plantation owners and businessmen, together with American military power, disposed of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893, the government apparatuses already incorporated the American system. From 1898 to 1959, Hawaii became a territory of the U.S. To consolidate and legitimatize its political and economic control over Hawaii, the U.S. implemented an education system, alongside the ideology of paternalism materialized in various forms of patronage and charity work, that constituted part of the civilizing mission and moral reform designed to transform the Hawaiians (Sally Engle Merry 21 – 28).[8] Tracking the emerging forms of subjectivity among Hawaii's people in "Aloha Kanaka Me Ke Aloha 'Aina: Local Culture and Society in Hawaii," Jonathan Y.

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[8] For an expansive ethnographic account of immigration, representation of Asians in the law, colonialism, importation of labor, and the history of plantation town between 1820s and 1900s, see Sally Engle Merry, *Colonizing Hawai`i: The Cultural Power of Law*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000), 131 – 144. Merry's exegesis of the historical process of colonization constitutes a background for the hierarchical differentiations and exclusions that are concomitant of the racialization that I am examining in "Carnival Queen."

Okamura takes up the question of identity, noting that "the term 'local' is increasingly used to refer to people born and raised in Hawaii" and "local culture" is used to reference the "shared lifestyle and its associated behaviors, values, and norms" (119 – 120). Okamura's discussion of the "Haole-Local conflict" makes clear that any investigation into the definition of "local" must address the history of complex social relations: "the view that local culture is derived from a sharing of diverse cultures seems to ignore the imposing of American institutions on Hawaiians and the immigrant plantation groups through armed revolution and the penal sanctions of the contract labor system" (123).[9] Framed within the context of U.S. annexation and capital investment as well a thriving plantation economy, ethnic identities of Asian and Pacific populations in Hawaii are the corollary of racialized citizenship, policies of exclusion and inclusion, and legislation that are relevant to understanding the political and social climate of the 1960s.[10]

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[9] The term "local," Okamura writes, is invoked "as a symbol of the common identity of people who appreciate Hawaii and its peoples and who desire to maintain control over Hawaii's communities" in the face of an influx of "mainland Haoles, Asian and Pacific immigrants, and tourist industry developers" (135). In *And the View from the Shore*, Stephen H. Sumida provides a detailed explication of the term "local": "A 'local' (meaning here a certain kind of person) is usually thought of as nonwhite, for instance a native Hawaiian, Asian American, Samoan, or Puerto Rican; or a local may be someone historically, ethnically originating in the working classes of Hawai'i, such as Portuguese American or a Spanish American with family history on the sugar plantations or the ranches of *paniolo* country" (xiv).

[10] Two crucial points can be mentioned in relation to how race structures American immigrant labor policies. The first is that an influx of workers from Japan arrived in Hawaii, when America passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, prohibiting the entry of labourers. In "Asians in Hawaii and the United States," David M. Reimers notes that "it was in Hawaii that the first major migration from Japan occurred" (52). To combat the problems of prostitution and drunkenness prevalent in the male Chinese community, the 1908 Gentlemen's

Looking back to the revolutionary period of the 1960s, I suggest that Hara's "Carnival Queen" is rooted in the larger histories of second-wave American feminism and the emergence of "Asian American" as a social formation. The year 1966 is particularly important to an understanding of the story, specifically the founding of NOW, the National Organization for Women, March Fong Eu's election to the California legislature,[11] and the Black Power movement's community programs for African American children in urban centres like Oakland, California. I propose that something more is at stake in Hara's setting her story in 1966, the year in which the Miss America Pageant was first

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Agreement permitted the entry of sixty thousand Japanese women as "picture brides" to the U.S. In Hawaii, the government specified that Japanese women must constitute 40 per cent of the Japanese contract labour, so that between 1894 and 1908, thousands of Japanese women immigrated into Hawaii as contract labour or as workers for their husbands (Takaki 248, 250). Hawaiian planters at the time also used the "Japanese family as a mechanism of labour control" (250). Although the Hawaiian sugar planters imported workers mainly from Japan between 1875 and 1910, they maintained an ethnically diverse work force with diverse national identities as a way to quell labour protest. As opposed to stereotypes of the passive Japanese immigrant, Takaki asserts, Japanese workers actively spoke out against labour exploitation, formed "blood unions," and went on strikes (252, 257, 258). The second is that following Japan's attack at Pearl Harbor, fewer Japanese Americans were interned in Hawaii in comparison to West Coast Japanese Americans. Reimer argues that this is attributed to Japanese Americans comprising one-third of Hawaii's population, which means that rounding them up en masse would throw the economy into disarray (58 – 59). It is precisely the continued significance of these policies, ideologies of race, gender, and class, and issues of citizenship that draws attention to the culturally specific régime of power and knowledge in Hawaii.

[11] In 1966, March Fong Eu was the first Asian American elected as a Democrat representing Oakland and parts of Castro Valley in the California State Assembly. From 1974 to 1993, Eu was California secretary of state, and from 1994 to 1996, she was ambassador to Micronesia ("Fong Eu Marches Ahead: Former Secretary of State to Run Again," 19 – 25 Jan. 2001, <http://www.asianweek.com/2001_01_19/bay3_marchfongeu.html>, 18 Oct. 2006).

broadcast on national television, and that requires taking seriously the sociocomplexity of this historical moment in mainland U.S. This something can be grasped in terms of the dissonance between an ideal national identity and ethnic identities in post-civil rights, multicultural U.S. According to Christine R. Yano, beauty pageants serve to fulfill cultural functions, one of which is to perpetuate the "myth of Hawai`i as a multiracial paradise" (60). Yano adds: "Beauty contests held at McKinley High School and the University of Hawai`i displayed ethnicity as a mythic rainbow of colors, spectacularized through the all-American idiom of a beauty contest" (64). This discursive incommensurability between the celebration of multicultural identities and an entrenched prejudice toward ethnicized others, including the model minority and the indigent, is what multiculturalism evacuates and what Hara's narrative attempts to foreground. As the narrative marshals the intensity of civil rights reforms, I suggest that its foregrounding of politics serves as an instructive lens to think through the questions of race and gender it interrogates. First, I take the black power movements as offering analytic and political possibilities for reading "Carnival Queen." In particular, it is worth recalling that Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, and Richard Aoki founded the Bay Area Black Panther Party in October 1966. Richard Aoki was the only Asian American Field Marshall in the history of the Panthers, and, from 1968 onwards, was one of the leaders of the Third World Liberation Front.[12] Extending Aoki's sustained activism and his role in Black

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[12] Born in 1938 and interned with his family at the Topaz War Relocation Centre in Utah between 1942 and 1945, sansei Japanese American civil rights activist Richard Aoki was raised in Oakland after World War II and educated at the

Panthers struggles against social injustice to approaching the historical framing of the annual event in "Carnival Queen," I argue that the story consciously engages history and politics by reactivating a revolutionary moment, a specific time of political turbulence and highly charged activities, that is integrally connected to the inception of Asian American identity and subject formation. Hara's text can be read as an activist response to the idealist abstraction of democratic vision and the aesthetic representations of multiculturalism, by drawing upon and keeping active a social moment of reformist politics, along with its implicit reference to Aoki's student leadership activism, as images of the Yellow Peril resurfaced in the form of model minority discourse. Although "Carnival Queen" was published in 1991, I suggest that the text does not preclude us from reading it as a rememory to (re)dress Japanese American national identity lest the radical political movements of the late 1960s be forgotten.[13] Because of the persistent resurgence

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University of California, Berkeley. Dubbed "Yellow Panther, Aoki was a "political 'bridge'" between two revolutionary movements—the Black Power movement and the Asian American Youth movement at a turbulent time in which the mainstream media pitted Asian Americans as the model minority against African Americans (Dolly Veale 319). For recent articles on Aoki, see, for example, Neela Banerjee, "Back in the Day …," *AsianWeek.com* 27 Apr. – 3 May 2001, 18 Oct. 2006 http://www.asianweek.com/2001_04_27/feature_richardaoki.html; and William Brand and Cecily Burt, "A Legacy of Activism: Behind Fury, Black Panthers Laid the Course for Social Programs," 8 Oct. 2006, 18 Oct. 2006 <http://mindfully.org/Reform/2006/Black-Panthers-Led8oct06.htm>. For an explanation of the concealment of Aoki's Field Marshall identity until the early 1990s, see "Black Panther History Month," *Oakland Tribune* 20 Oct. 2002, 18 Oct. 2006 <http://www.oaklandnet.com/parks/news/102102c.asp>

[13] Two moments in the 1970s and 1980s that might be recalled in a consideration of Hara's text are the Japanese American redress movement and Japan bashing in the 1980s, as a result of Japan's robust economy and the U.S.'s weak economy. First, following the civil rights movement, the *Sansei*, third-generation of Japanese Americans, demanded redress for the internment of Japanese Americans

of the Yellow Peril, I argue that "Carnival Queen" responds cautiously to the optimism of the multicultural vision, casting it as having more to do with civilatory aesthetics and less to do with cultural diversity and democratic ideals. Whereas multiculturalism endorses cultural diversity and hybridization with the assumption that it is progressive politics, "Carnival Queen" stresses that it is precisely this kind of assumption that is characteristic of the persistent workings of and blindness to an affective dis-ease experienced by the Japanese American beauty contestants in McKinley High. The annual carnival queen coronation in McKinley High is thus arguably a mechanism that holds together the fabric of tradition and functions as an ideal register of continuity in multicultural Hawaii.

Second, I argue that the setting of "Carnival Queen" strategically references the mid-1960s second-wave feminism, so as to underscore the ways in which Asian American women have been pressured by ideological forces to fit into societal expectations and fantasies about femininity. Being touted as the first modern civil rights organization for women, NOW is identified with enabling women's equal participation in the economy, for it spurred women into forming specific political organizations that addressed concerns of women and working peoples. Collins adds that the Miss America demonstration of September 1968

(1942 – 1945). In 1988, the Congress approved the compensatory payments of US$20,000 each, which were made out to Japanese Americans in 1990. Second, Keith Osajima notes that in the 1980s, "the discourse on Asian American Success, particularly in higher education, is linked to growing anti-Asian sentiment" (454). Contemporary articles constitute Asian success stories "a potential threat," leading to increasing resentment toward Asian Americans. At the same time, hostility toward Japan was projected on Japanese Americans. The killing of Chinese American Vincent Chin in 1982 is a case in point. Two laid-off Chrysler autoworkers in Detroit mistook Chin for a Japanese and beat him to death for their job displacement (454).

marked a sea change in people's attitudes toward the women's liberation movement.[14] In the postwar era, the Miss America pageant had morphed into "a wholesome Americana" so that the demonstrators at Atlantic City baffled and surprised the viewing public (439). Ruth Rosen discerns the enduring influence of the ideal beauty queen, stating that young women still query, "Why were feminists in 1968 so angry at beauty pageants?" (*World Split Open* 159). President Richard Nixon, after all, announced that Miss America was the only television program he permitted his daughters "to stay up late to watch" (439). Notably, therefore, in spite of the civil rights movement and beauty pageant demonstration that occurred in mainland America in the late 1960s, what distinguishes "Carnival Queen" from a retrospective retelling of a high school beauty contest in 1966 is its refusal to foreclose the past in the form of remembrance of things past. Instead, Hara presents the narrative in terms of temporality by having Sam unfold the past in the present tense. The presentness of the narrative can be read as Hara's tactic of intervention in Hawaii, where race, class, and gender are overdetermined, particularly where the ethnic stereotyping of the model minority continues to interpellate the Asian American subject with privileges and rewards. By opening Sam's narrative in the present, Hara disturbs the stability of notions of subjectivity and national identity, and cautions against complacency in resisting the telos of progress.

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[14] The New York Radical Women organized about four hundred women to launch a protest on the boardwalk of the Atlantic City Convention Centre on September 7, 1968, the day of the Miss America Pageant. Organizers of the protest condemned the pageant's standards of beauty and practice of sending beauty queens and contestants to entertain soldiers fighting in the Vietnam War. Besides the 1968 Miss America demonstration, Kathleen C. Berkeley observes that new women's groups started to proliferate on the scene, such as women from the Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy From Hell (W I T C H), who utilized dress as a signifier of resistance fighter identity. Formed during 1968 and 1969, women in black costume made use of guerrilla theatre as a mass protest against New York business institutions and the New York Stock Exchange in 1968; see *The Women's Liberation Movement in America*, 35. While the W I T C H's protest against business establishment is not immediately applicable to "Carnival Queen," the feminist group's dress tactic is helpful in interpreting the larger applicability of Hara's sartorial narrative device to challenge the persistence of tradition and social structures.

American Beauty Contests and Hollywood Icons

According to Frank Deford, the first one-time only beauty competition took place at a 1880 summer festival in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, to promote business; Thomas Edison was one of the judges (108 – 110).[15] When the first Miss America was held in 1921, the contestants paraded up and down on stage in the trendiest swimsuits, much to the audience's simultaneous surprise and thrill of excitement. The organizers, however, proclaimed that "the pageant was conducted in the spirit of athleticism rather than exhibitionism" (346).[16] More than anything else, the Miss America pageant is a showcase of bathing beauties rather than the containment of body display. As a discursive marker of gender and class, the beauty queen also plays vital roles in the projection of a portrait purportedly of wholesome American womanhood.[17] The history and nature of the American beauty contest is worth examining in some detail, as it underscores the event's implication in entrepreneurialism, the structure and maintenance of community, and the feminine expectations exacted of women. While beauty competition has its origins in Greek mythology,[18] I want to identify certain conceptions of late-nineteenth- and twentieth century American beauty contests in order to further my inquiry into issues of race and gender, and models of emulation in a politically progressive era like the 1960s that celebrated multiculturalism. Hara locates feminism in mainland U.S. and mobilizes it in her story in order to raise feminist consciousness in the Hawaiian Islands. After all, as Stephen H. Sumida points out, "Asian Americans in this Local society also generally assume identification with the national, political, and economic label 'American,' as well as their specific ethnicities within Local, heterogeneous culture" (277).

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[15] Frank Deford, *There She is: The Life and Times of Miss America*. New York: Viking, 1971.

[16] Identifying the connection between gender and women's sports, Blanche Linden-Ward and Carol Hurd Green write, in *American Women in the 1960s: Changing the Future*: "Women's areas of competition and striving before the sixties were more traditionally circumscribed to beauty pageants, cheerleading competitions, bake-offs, and culinary contests" (227). Despite the Miss America protest, beauty contests with their emphasis on swimsuit and evening dress continue to draw young female participants in the 1960s.

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[17] In "Miss U.S.A.," Emma Knight, who won the crown in 1973, is critical of beauty pageants, which reinscribe conventional notions of women's place. She relates the unpleasant story of how she had been taught and drilled to perform the role of the ideal beauty queen, such as "how to sit daintily, how to pose in a bathing suit," and what to say (3). Beauty pageants thus become an institutional site of the subordination of contestants to discipline. This reflects what William Goldman deduces from his experience as one of the judges of the 1988 Miss America Scholarship Pageant: "That weird hand posture must have started decades back and become the only way to get through the interview. They must have been told—'DON'T MOVE YOUR HANDS, WHATEVER YOU DO.' And were they good at obeying orders. . . . They were all so practiced. Drilled and taught and schooled. There was somewhere a proper way to become Miss America, and they all knew it and they all did it" (*Hype and Glory* 245). Goldman's recollection of adjudicating the contestants based on their swimsuits, evening gowns, and interviews suggests that beauty competitions are located within economic and sociohistorical structures that determine what can be considered acceptable womanhood, and by whom. The beauty pageant is premised on what the beauty contestants say and embody, and what they perform follows on the lines of already learned discursive style and mapped-out feminine and dress identities. Susan Duff's *The Miss Universe Beauty Book: You Can Be a Pageant Winner—Or Look Like One*, for example, is framed as a text making available privileged inside information and guidance directed at beauty-pageant hopefuls. Duff emphasizes the monetary rewards and other perks such as free swimsuits and shoes before articulating step by step how contestants go about achieving the poise that makes them beauty winners. Hara's description of the laborious cleansing and moisturizing skin care routine in "Carnival Queen" finds an echo in Duff's gruelling procedures of keeping the skin clean.

[18] The account of Paris, son of Priam and Hecuba, serving as a presiding judge for the three goddesses of beauty and the subsequent Trojan war is adumbrated in Diane P. Thompson's *The Trojan War: Literature and Legends from the Bronze Age to the Present* (32). According to Thompson, Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite fight over a golden apple that Eris, Goddess of strife, ascribes "to the fairest" (29).

In *American Beauty,* Lois W. Banner outlines the transition of beauty contests from a spectacle of curiosities in the nineteenth century to a legitimated, prestigious production in the twentieth century that promotes consumerism and tourism. Banner posits that Phineas T. Barnum organized the first modern beauty competition in New York City's American Museum in 1854. While Franconi's Hippodrome had featured circuses and "tournaments with queens of love and beauty" in 1853, Barnum had his contestants pose for a panel of judges to evaluate their face and physical beauty (255). Barnum also conceived the popular photographic beauty contest in which visitors could vote for the most beautiful portrait in "Barnum's Gallery of American Beauty" (256, 339). Following the model of Barnum's American Museum, Banner writes, the New York dime museums staged beauty competitions that played an important role in "transmitting to immigrant men and women American standards of physical appearance" (258). Banner's insights into the functions of beauty contests in immigrant locales is useful for theorizing how they bear witness to a history of sedimenting gender in which beauty queens are instrumental in bringing about the constitution of ideal national subjects.[19] This notion of the female body as a site of transmitting knowledge and values echoes the assertion of Colleen Ballerino Cohen, Richard Wilk, and Beverly Stoeltje who write: "The idealized femininity put on stage in beauty contests is often closely associated with broader concepts such as morality, or with larger social entities such as the 'nation'" (3). Indeed, "Carnival Queen" provokes one to consider how beauty queens and good citizenship are seamlessly stitched together. But while "Carnival Queen" alludes to the shifting, transitional political and social consciousness-raising of the 1960s, particularly questions about domesticity, employment, and women's roles, it does not merely reactivate: it is a critically feminist interrogation of the conventional understanding and narrative representation of ideal gender identities and citizenship. "Carnival Queen" is embedded in and responds to a long lasting tradition of narrating the nation and its ideals. Tensions within and between selfhood, gender identities, and the ideals of whiteness that structure the assimilation of Asian Americans into the national fabric continue to exist despite the 1965 reformation of the Immigration and Nationality Act and the Immigration Act of 1990.[20]

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[19] Many élite theatres were relocated to sites beyond Astor Place during the 1850s. To educate and edify the families of New York City, however, Barnum's museum was conveniently situated in Broadway and Ann Street, yet near the lower east side and moderate-income districts. See Bruce A. McConachie, "Museum Theatre and the Problem of Respectability" (65 – 67).

In order to examine the representation of ideal gender identities, I will draw on images in and the pleasures of looking at Hollywood films in ways that move beyond the visual pleasures of cinema as solely the realm of male spectatorship. I thus begin my analysis by looking at Jackie Stacey's approach to female viewers and voyeurism in *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship*, which delves into how women look at female stars, at images of femininity. Stacey takes issue with Laura Mulvey over her concepts of the visual pleasures of cinema in which the viewing universal subject is male and the viewed object is female. Psychoanalytic interpretations of desirable images of women in film, Stacey asserts, seldom engage in ethnography such as viewers' letters and diaries, interviews, and surveys. Besides having no interest in any kind of active involvement with the perspective of actual cinema audiences, Stacey adds, the psychoanalytic frameworks concentrate on the unconscious workings in film narrative and presume a universal gender position and unified identity. What psychoanalytic approaches fail to consider, Stacey contends, is "the possible homoerotic pleasures for the female spectator" (27). Even when psychoanalytic models adumbrate homoeroticism, Stacey argues that they at best "can only consider woman's desire for another woman in terms of masculinity" (27). For Stacey, the term "identification" can be characterized as the "negotiation between spectators and their star ideals," in which the crux of the matter is "the recognition of similarities and differences" (128). Here I extend Stacey's theory on female spectatorship and formation of identities to my discussion of "Carnival Queen." In relation to the ideals of femininity and complexities of cinematic identification, both Greta Garbo and Ann-Margret offer the narrator Sam "some forms of homoerotic pleasure," and both Terry's and Leilani's attractive feminine appearance offer her "homoerotic pleasures of a love for that ideal" and, I might add, fantasies of a partial crossover of race and gender identities (173, 174).

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[20] While the Immigration and Nationality Act was legislated in 1965, it took full effect in 1968, admitting immigrants from all countries.

It is important to underscore the pre-Miss America protest context in which Hara's narrative is set and the logic of exclusion in the history of Asian America that she offers. In *Technologies of Gender*, Teresa de Lauretis, drawing upon Michel Foucault's theory of technology of sex, elucidates the dominant ideological construction of gender in films. De Lauretis draws out the nuances in Foucault's history of sexuality by proposing that gender, "both as representation and as self-representation, is the product of various social technologies" (ix). Pointing out that "cinema—the cinematic apparatus—is a technology of gender," de Lauretis states that it is crucial to make inquiries into how the representation of the female body "becomes absorbed subjectively by each individual whom that technology addresses" (13). Up until the last scene, when Sam is empowered by a friendship bond with Terry, the simultaneity of alienation from and identification with the gender identities Greta Garbo and Ann-Margret represent persists throughout "Carnival Queen."

From the outset, Hara begins the narrative with Sam's preoccupation with the ideal of gender identities and her description of Terry and the girls at

McKinley High School. An attractive girl with all her impeccably groomed style, Terry is portrayed as having exquisite wardrobe taste and is coded textually as almost white. What is at stake in this notion of whiteness and garments that swathe the body-conscious beauty contestants? In his discussion of whiteness "as explicit ideal" in *White*, Richard Dyer argues that "to look white is to look clean" (72, 76). Dyer elaborates that "[a]ll lists of the moral connotations of white as symbol in Western culture are the same: purity, spirituality, transcendence, cleanliness, virtue, simplicity, chastity" (72). Throughout, "Carnival Queen" demonstrates the link between whiteness, beauty, and cleanliness, or hygiene, which Roland Barthes describes as "the most important of American values (at least mythically)" (*Language of Fashion* 111). The opening lines of the narrative offer a demarcation between the narrator Sam and Terry, where Sam sums up Terry concisely and literally in three words, "Terry is beautiful" (335). Next, Sam describes Terry's height, one of the criteria for identifying contestants who are beauty queen material: "She is about 5'4" tall, which is tall enough to be a stewardess. I am only 5 feet tall, which is too short" (335). And although Sam cannot fathom the reasons Terry is her friend, Sam longs for the skin and body that Terry possesses: "We're too, Japanese girl [sic], you know, plain. I mean, Terry has skin like a porcelain doll. She has cheekbones like Garbo, a body like Ann-Margret, she has legs like, well, like not any Japanese girl I've ever seen" (336). Following this, Sam writes extensively and admiringly about Terry's "beautiful face," "perfect body," and dress sense: "She always dresses perfectly, too. She always wears an outfit, a dress with matching straw bag and colored leather shoes. Her hair is always set, combed, and sprayed, she even wears nylon stockings under her jeans, even on really hot days" (336). Another pointed look at Terry occurs when she arrives with a white Mustang to pick up Sam on the night of the Carnival Queen contest: "Terry is wearing a triangle denim scarf in her hair, a workshirt and jeans. Her face is flushed from driving with the Mustang's top down and she looks really glamorous" (345). It is significant that Sam's graphic illustration of Terry's anatomy and clothes not only underscores the centrality of dress as a signifier of ideal femininity, but it also registers Terry's transition to an adult femininity through clothes like jeans and nylons, which are tied up with sex appeal and fashion.[21] Here, Terry's dressed body is elevated to that of a glamorous star by Sam's play with Japanese American representations of femininity, which produce an illusion of whiteness, of equality with screen icons, and partake of Hollywood icons who structure her consciousness.

But what is it, exactly, that gets internalized and over-identified in "Carnival Queen"? To seek an understanding of movie stars as models of fashion and ideal femininity, I want to consider briefly Greta Garbo and Ann-Margret. In *Swingin' Chicks of the '60s*, Chris Strodder's detailed work into the history of fashionable and resilient women adored by both adults and teenagers provides a starting point for a critical reading of Sam's screen idols. Famous for her voluptuous figure and vivacity, Ann-Margret captivates both male and female audiences, whether in black-tights or in a bathing suit. Importantly, Ann-Margret graced the cover of *Life* magazine in 1963. Alexander Walker, in *Garbo*, charts Garbo's rise to fame and star power as an actress when Hollywood first became "America's overseas empire, setting ways of thought, behaviour, dress and living for the civilized world, or, at least, those parts of it with cinema rarity" (124). Born and raised in Sweden, Garbo petitioned for naturalization and became a U.S. citizen in 1951 (Karen Swenson, *Greta Garbo* 259). Famous for her femme fatale roles and exotic, extravagant costumes, Garbo's first acting assignment was a short for an advertisement called "How Not to Wear Clothes" in 1921 (16). Tangential to my discussion of written signifiers of dress in "Carnival Queen" is Garbo's white complexion and fame as a legendary film star who once played the role of a queen when she was cast as the eponymous heroine in *Queen Christina* (1933). Roland Barthes, studying the "snowy thickness" of Garbo's makeup in *Queen Christina*, argues that her face is "an Idea" ("The Face of Garbo" 82, 84). In "Garbo," Ann Hollander identifies Garbo's enduring appeal with her "brand of Swedishness" (206).

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[21] It should be pointed out that the growing popularity of blue jeans during the 1960s was attributed to a rejection of the materialistic values of middle-class society. See Edward J. Rielly, *The 1960s*, 85 – 89. As opposed to the gown-clad contestants, the jean-clad Terry is equally beautiful, well dressed. Importantly, even though Terry is popular, she senses in Sam a capacity for coalitional struggle.

Similar to Garbo, Ann-Margret Olsson was born in Sweden. It is also clear that Ann-Margret is a star whose body was tailored to connote, in Mulvey's terminology, "to-be-looked-at-ness" specifically for the pleasure of the male viewing subject ("Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" 430). Yet in opposition to Mulvey's psychoanalytic film study, "Carnival Queen" shatters the presumption of a masculine viewer and inscribes a female spectator subject.

Specifically salient for the purpose of my analysis is the linkage Hollander makes between Garbo's Nordic ethnicity, beauty, and screen appeal.[22] In rendering explicit Sam's identificatory desire for white, Nordic bodies, the narrative represents a self-reflexive response to the prevailing ideology and points to the stereotypes that inscribe Asian American identities. Because Sam singles out Garbo and Ann-Margret as models of feminine beauty, I argue that the Nordic body, cloaked in form-fitting, streamlined attire, has taken on distinct political and social connotations, especially when it is mobilized in the 1966 Carnival Queen contest.

In order to address dress as a powerful signifier in the organizing processes of racial and gender identifications in the narrative, I will explore through a critical lens the characters' identification with Hollywood female screen and style icons. Hollywood cinematic production, along with the trend-setting wardrobes of film stars, has been instrumental in the socialization of its audience. Mendes and de la Haye assert that designers are quick to seize the chance to adapt and make profitable use of the "on-and-off-screen" signature styles of actresses, citing the "ultra-stylish" Greta Garbo as having had a strong influence on the fashion sense of many women (90). In "Hollywood Sets the Trend," Margit J. Mayer writes that female film stars became fashion models for millions of women during the Golden Age of Hollywood cinema (54). Mayer goes on to state that costume designers who outfitted "glamour goddesses" like Greta Garbo were not, properly speaking, "couturiers," but rather were "art directors of femininity" (54). To put it simply, the "costume artists," together with the help of "cosmetic surgeons, diet gurus, and make-up specialists," collaborated in carving a star into "her own image" (54). I have dwelt upon the gender and sartorial make-up of Garbo as a concerted, strategic effort within Hollywood and the fashion industry because it is through them that the signifiers of dress operate to signify a particular set of racial and gender identities. Sam's invocation of Garbo is an illustration of the power of Hollywood cinematic production to regulate desire and fabricate role models through which racial, class, and gender identities are understood and internalized.[23] In this respect, whiteness is a signifier by which ideals of womanhood are measured and materially rewarded.

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[22] According to Nancy Etcoff, the standard of physical attractiveness is white, that is, northern and western Europeans. Etcoff states that the standard of beauty from 1959 to 1980 "was blond and blue-eyed" (118). In 1984, the Miss America crown for the first time went to an African American, Vanessa Williams, whose reign ended mid-year amidst scandal (117 – 118).

In "The Carole Lombard in Macy's Window," Charles Eckert traces the historical linkage between the economy of Hollywood and the marketing of a certain feminine identity. In the late 1930s, as Eckert points out, films were shot in locales such as "fashion salons, department stores, [and] beauty parlors" (116). Garbo belongs to a star system available to Hollywood's connection with the American marketplace, serving as a model for women's apparel (104). Both Garbo and Ann-Margret, then, are stars fitted and, to borrow Mary Ann Doane's phrase, "proffered to the female spectator for her imitation" ("The Economy of

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[23] Tracing the trajectory of changes in cosmetic surgery in *Survival of the Prettiest: The Science of Beauty*, Nancy Etcoff maintains that the rules of perfect facial features are entirely contingent. She mentions that the "enormous creased eye-lids seen on Greta Garbo and other stars of the 1930s are rarely seen today" (146). But whatever the tenor of change, it is Garbo who prompted *Vogue* to note the "Garbo-ization of America" (Teresa Riordan, *Inventing Beauty* 11 – 12).

Desire" 128). Here, Hollywood movies not only provide screen legends such as Garbo and Ann-Margret through which European ideal of femininity and belongings are imagined, but also serve as technologies of discipline in which discourses of national identity and female subjectivity are produced. As I will go on to explore, McKinley High School's technologies of pageantry culture in Hara's story inculcate practices of self-regulation as a way to produce postcolonial subjectivities. Placed within the cultural context of gender identities in the Hollywood system of the period, Hara's treatment and deployment of signifiers of dress adds weight to a critique of Hollywood films' role in promulgating the American dream and transcoding representations of mainstream American expectations, values, and dress practices.

However, media representations of Asian femininity must also be considered in relation to Hara's story. In the 1950s and 1960s, Sheridan Prasso notes, film and network television only offered one Asian female actress, Anna May Wong, who was famous in both America and Europe (62, 77). Widely considered the world's best-dressed woman, Wong was renowned as an actress clothed in Chinese gowns. While Wong played a range of roles, such as "slave girls, prostitutes, temptresses, and doomed lovers," in Broadway theatre production and Hollywood films, it is the image of the quintessential Dragon Lady that established her star status and that stuck in the filmgoers' minds (78).[24] For Jessica Hagedorn, in "Asian Women in Film," the stigmatizing impact of female Asian American stereotypes—geisha girls and dragon ladies—that do not correspond to the diverse and changing character of Asian American women crucially indicates that Hollywood's installation of these recurring Asian American geisha-type images does not square with its depictions of ideal Nordic beauties.[25] Given the limited images of Asian Americans on film and television at the time, it is not surprising that Hara's narrator Sam demonstrates an affinity for Garbo and Ann-Margret in conjuring up images of mainstream ideals of femininity and whiteness that dominate the field of vision.

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[24] Prasso adds that before the anti-miscegenation laws were lifted in 1948, the Motion Picture Code prohibited on screen interracial relationships, so Wong's character could not have any form of romantic attachment with a white man (79).

Right from beginning, Sam asserts the persistence of whiteness and, particularly, the physiological specificity of its forms of violence. Recalling how everyone told her that Sam should take part in the Cherry Blossom contest[26] before her daughter's complexion became as "dark" as her father's, Sam's mother is wholly supportive of the skin and feminine skills regimen that beauty contestants must undergo: "Good, might make you stand up straight. I would get you a back brace, but when you were small, we paid so much money for your legs, to get special shoes connected to a bar. You only cried and never would wear them. That's why you still have crooked legs" (341). As Sam follows Mrs Takahara's instructions on how to walk and model, she regrets not having heeded her mother's advice: "I should have worn the stupid shoes when I was small. I'm bow-legged. Just like my father" (341). Terry is not exempted from parental pressure either, as Sam remarks wryly: "You would think that being fashionable and coordinated all the time would take all her energy and wear her out, but her mother wants her to be smart too" (337). One of the strengths of "Carnival Queen" lies in its attention to the dynamics of institutional, familial, and individual forms of violence. This attention functions to call into question the racial ascription of physiological characteristics that are marked as opposed to a mainstream standard of ideal femininity.

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[25] While my reading of Asian American stereotypes takes off from Prasso's and Hagedorn's observations, I want to mention that the primary literary source of negative representations of Asian Americans is found more broadly in popular culture such as pulp fiction, dime novels, magazine illustrations, and silent movies. See Robert G. Lee, *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (12).

[26] For a detailed discussion of the history of the Cherry Blossom Queen Pageant and Festival in Honolulu, see Rebecca Chiyoko King-O'Riain, the section entitled "Honolulu, Hawaii: Bridging Back to the Homeland" (207 – 219). According to Chiyoko King-O'Riain, the Cherry Blossom Pageant in Honolulu "has been the largest and most competitive Japanese American pageant" ever since 1953, reflecting not only the large Japanese American community, but also the economic and political power Japanese Americans hold in Hawaii, particularly in the 1990s (208). It is not surprising that Sam's mother places emphasis on the Cherry Blossom contest, considering that the glamorous pageant has garnered local news live coverage and television interviews.

Sam can look at images of femininity and engage with the visual pleasure of cinema, but the effects of scopophilia also work to discipline and haunt her and other Asian American girls in McKinley High. What Sam confronts in the mirror are racialized signifiers that do not fit the signified white femininity of Hollywood icons. Hara establishes the central recurring motifs—signifiers of dress and embodied identities—of the narrative within the first few paragraphs. At the first orientation session for contestants of the beauty queen competition, Sam surveys every one of them and notes that Terry "is wearing her blue suede jumper and silk blouse, navy stockings and navy patent leather shoes" (337).[27] Throughout, Sam continues to negotiate with the contradictory feelings she has in relation to ideals of femininity and their cumulative rewards and to her awareness that mainstream ideals of gender are unattainable. This much is evident in her characterizations of Leilani Jones, "the only girl who can possibly win" the beauty contest (338). Twice her friend Trudye asks rhetorically: "You think Leilani is going to win?" and "Lani is probably going to win, yeah?" (342). Sam's depiction of Leilani is largely in terms of delicate, disciplined, femininity. Sam's articulation brings to light that Lani's fairy-tale femininity and mixed-race heritage allow her to cross the threshold into mainstream whiteness, to transcend the imposition of racial markings, and to secure the crown. In short, Lani emerges from Sam's account as the apotheosis of crossover Carnival Queen, as a mirror of the ideal gendered American identity:

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[27] Terry's self-representation through styling index competencies in grooming and sophistication are indications of how she is implicated in a set of representations of gender produced within cultural discourse. In *History of 20th*

> Lani is hapa, Japanese-haole. She inherited the best features from everybody. She is tall and slim, with light brown hair and butter frosting skin. I don't even know what she is wearing. Leilani is so beautiful it doesn't matter what she is wearing. She is smooth, and gracefully quiet. (338)

Yet, Sam's description underscores the discursive matrix in which elements of race and gender are imbricated with each other in the creation and maintenance of desirable images of womanhood.

Century Fashion, Elizabeth Ewing points out that stockings, once de rigueur "to the well-dressed woman," were superseded by tights, which soon dominated the hosiery market in the late 1960s (183).

The repetitive emphasis on body and clothes, particularly, underscores the pervasive sense among the ethnicized characters that existing standards of constructed identities are oppressive and hierarchical. This aura of whiteness and softness comes through most clearly in Sam's sensuous articulation of the soft, incandescent quality and whiteness that emanate from the texture and fabrics draped over Leilani's and the beauty contestants' bodies. The epithet "white" is simultaneously resonant in Sam's conjuring up of images of pure, flawless beauty and femininity and the refractions of internalized whiteness shared by the girls in McKinley High. Given the powerful force of white feminine dress to elicit admiration, it is not surprising to find the imagery of gender and dress in the narrative is attuned to and informed by the spirit of the moment.

Interestingly enough, this invocation of luminous, white clothing has its origins in productions of youthful designs, which were in vogue in the mid-1960s. Designers were not the only ones creating clothing with white fabric for their fashion at that time. So, too, were galleries and museums, which were interested in deploying fashionable dress as a marker of social identity. As Marylin Bender declares in *The Beautiful People*: "One of the most eclectic fashion shows of the decade was the opening of the Whitney Museum in its new ziggurat building at Madison Avenue and 73rd Street on September 28, 1966. It drew Jacqueline Kennedy in white satin and long gloves" (67). "Carnival Queen" is replete with the kind of white images that were pervasive in fashion discourses at the time. Sam recalls: "Lani looks like her white dress is made of sugar crystals. As she passes, her crown sparkles tiny rainbows under the hundreds of lightbulbs from the tent and flashbulbs popping like little suns" (348). In this scene, Lani's seamlessly fit white dress and the Princesses' white gloves are consonant with the innovative dress designer André Courrèges, who produced space-age designs and made much use of white and silver, giving a certain fashion cachet to pastel shades in 1964. In *20th Century Fashion*, Valerie Mendes and Amy de la Haye write: "For him, white signified youth and optimism—he liked the fact that it had to be kept scrupulously clean" (166). With the focus on a growing teenage market, Courrèges created white frocks, white suits, white knee length socks, "white eclipse glasses" and "white gloves, popularly known as 'shorties'" (166). Yet these fashions were not without their particular potential inflections. In "Space Age Fashion," Suzanne Baldaia contends that American space age technology had come under scrutiny by the counterculture, which had come to believe "the space race signified an élitism and a hunger for power" (186). In drawing attention to dress as a contested terrain for competing interests and significations, my purpose is to suggest that the articulation of dress and whiteness has everything to do with prevailing fashion in a time of considerable agitation for political and social reforms.

In "Drugs, Dreams, and Dusty Colors," Elizabeth Wilson makes a connection between the political and cultural changes of the years from 1967 to 1975 and changes in fashion, elucidating how both André Courréges's and Mary Quant's designs reflecting optimism eventually gave way to clothing that functioned to echo messages of revolution (98). Both Baldaia's and Watson's discussion of the value of space-age fashion imagery can, by extension, apply to a reading of "Carnival Queen." American space exploration, ranging from the first American astronauts walking on the moon in 1969 to the Hubble Space Telescope whose mirror optics can detect ultraviolet and infrared light, was not only motivated by Cold War competition, but also the national prestige accruing from space navigation activities.[28] White élite moonwalkers clad in white space suits and Courréges's space-age fashion carried much of the relevant symbolism of U.S. national strength and technological power. The character Sam is used as a vehicle for Hara to open the question as to how whiteness continues to be a feminine ideal from which considerable power and privilege would accrue to beauty contestants in McKinley High School. Published in 1991, "Carnival Queen" can be read as a critique of the prevailing narrative of American success and progress, particularly the progress of American space technology, whose orbiting observation satellites and powerful mirror optical system has been operating in tandem with military and security activities. Like the sophisticated mirrors of a space telescope, the "make-up kit and mirror" that the beauty contestants receive are part of a system of observation and surveillance, and the internalization of discipline by students, such as "the proper make-up and attitude" (338). Would it be too far-fetched to suggest that the contestants assembled at the so-called orientation session held in the school library gather in a site similar to an observation laboratory in which "defective" complexion is subject to the panopticist gaze? Such discipline leads the students to believe in the necessity of correcting "defects" in their skin, with the aid of Kamedo cosmetics and beauty consultant Mrs Chung's "white stuff," in order to become the "right stuff," to borrow Tom Wolfe's title to his 1979 novel *The Right Stuff* (339).

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[28] Beginning with the success of its photoreconnaissance intelligence-gathering satellites in 1960, NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration of the U.S.) supervised the construction of the Hubble Space Telescope in 1977 and launched it by the space shuttle *Discovery* into orbit in 1990 ("Space Exploration." *Encyclopædia Britannica Online,* 15 Sept. 2006 <http://search.eb.com.ezproxy.ezproxy.ae.talonline.ca/eb/article-237024>).

If space age fashion had become "passé" in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, then Hara's narrative invokes signifiers of whiteness to undermine the achievements of the U.S. space programs and to interrogate the normalcy of whiteness.[29] By lingering upon Lani's skin and dressed body as constituents of a fairy tale dominating the field of textual vision, the narrative dismantles the romanticized notion of feminine beauty it invokes. Implicit in the criteria for the selection of a Carnival Queen is, as Sam says, race: "Every year, it is the same tradition. A big bunch of girls gets nominated to run, but everybody knows from intermediate school on which girl in the class is actually going to win. She has to be hapa" (337). Sam knows that even the teachers who take part in the "make-up demonstration" would not win because they look like the rest of the Japanese American students in the school who have "musubi bodies, daikon legs, furoshiki-shaped, home-made dresses. . . mud and sweat everywhere" (344). Hara does not elide the hierarchical categories that define ethnic groups; neither would she downplay the tensions among them through Sam, who draws attention to the situation precisely as it is: the Carnival Queen beauty contest is about competition, racial and gender identities, and power. From the premise of a racialized ideal womanhood, the narrative cautions against a hasty celebration of multicultural diversity and inclusion, which serves to obscure both the cultural specificity of the pressure that parents and community exact on the Asian American subject, and the underlying issues of social justice and racial difference.

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[29] Analyzing the written signifiers of fabrics and feminine apparel of space age fashion in *Harper's Bazaar*, Baldaia states that the U.S. embarked on the most space missions, reinforcing the notion that the success of U.S. space explorations are "grounded in reality" (185).

By taking up issues with clothing the body, Hara shows how Sam and Terry work through the contradictions of racial and gender identities and questions the materiality and labour required to reproduce idealized white femininity as a normalizing frame of reference for beauty. In *Masculine Domination*, Pierre Bourdieu's assertion that "femininity is made explicit in finishing schools," where girls learn skills such as dressing up and applying make-up, acknowledges the oblique relation between the subordination of the female body and "complicity of women" (28, 29). At first glance, the narrative would seem to enact all the processes of assimilation as a set of established ideals of beauty that are often foreclosed to Asian American characters. In order to prepare for the beauty competition, contestants undertake a series of modeling lessons and beautifying regimen, some of which are simply absurd attempts at transforming their physiology. When Michel Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish*, conceptualizes the mechanisms of power based on his investigation into institutional practices generated by European society for the management of the body in the eighteenth century, he demonstrates how violence undergirds a regime of control and discipline. I want to push this discussion further by drawing on and extending the reach of Foucault's concept of disciplining the body, in order to bring to the fore how the sartorial body is a site of messy materiality and hegemonic discourses. Considering the beauty regimen that the beauty contestants must undergo, I suggest that accompanying a plethora of cleansing, scrubbing, and moisturizing is physical, cultural, and racial violence, a violence that is normalized and rationalized by the school. Motivated by desires to win the crown, as well as "to feel safe and secure," contestants collaborate with a panoptic structure of body management, training, and supervision (344). The emphasis that the narrative places on the skin care ritual, as an essential self-disciplining practice, renders the transfiguration process messy and problematic.

Closely connected to the beauty regimen is the construction of skin cleansing for the contestants as necessary before they become what Mrs Takahara calls "worthy representatives of McKinley High School" (338). Under the supervision of Mrs Chung, the girls must "stare into [their] own separate mirrors" and follow a step-by-step guide to beautifying their eyes and skin (338). Whereas Sam is given "pink liquid" to scrub her face and "a plastic tube of dark beige" to moisturize her skin, Lani is given "white stuff" and "a little translucent cream" (338, 339). Of particular interest here is the concern with making corrections to "skins," a concern with the yellow peril, that characterizes Mrs Chung's instructions:

> "Now we moisturize," Mrs Chung is going on. "We use this step to correct defects in the tones of our skins." I look over at Terry. I can't see any defects in any of the tones of her skin.

> "This mauve moisturizer corrects sallow undertones," Mrs Chung says.
>
> "What's shallow?" I whisper to Terry.
>
> "SALLOW," she whispers back disgusted. "Yellow." (339)

Moreover, Mrs Chung tells the girls that their eyelashes "must be trained to bend correctly" as a necessary grooming regime, and Sam's friend Trudye must wear Scotch tape on her eyelids (340). Despite its allure, the narrative indicates that this clinical skin treatment, designed for flushing out "all the dirt and impurities," is troubling because it pivots around terms such as "impure," "defects," and "skin," which posit issues of race as a first consideration; that is, Asian American contestants must refurbish their skin to the demands and regulating ideals of whiteness (339, 340).

That the narrative locates the education and regularization of cleanliness in schools points to the ways in which pedagogy is linked to the parallel interest in the production of civilized, morally superior individuals. I suggest that Hara reinstalls to critical interrogation the history and cultural resonance of cleanliness centered on the body.[30] In this, I place the material and social benefits of instilling bodily cleanliness in Asian Americans in historical context by drawing from the interconnection between the production and marketing of beauty aids, cleanliness ritual artefacts, and the representation of ideal citizenship. According to Juliann Sivulka, in *Stronger than Dirt: A Cultural History of Advertising Personal Hygiene in America, 1875 – 1940*, the soapmakers such as Lever Brothers, Palmolive, Procter & Gamble, Colgate, Kirk, and Swift formed the Cleanliness Institute to educate Americans about the ethical value of clean habits, which included putting on "a clean shirt or dress every day" and washing the body thoroughly with soap and water (234). Formed in 1927, the institute mobilized popular magazines, industrial journals, education and health periodicals, and advertising campaigns to teach Americans cleanliness, how to "achieve a better social position," and how to "attain attractiveness and popularity" (234). In order to implement part of the technology to "remake" an ethnically diverse immigrant labor force, the hygiene reformers of the Americanization movement instituted a program that taught English, dress practices, and hygiene to immigrants and their children (114). "Carnival Queen" thus re-enacts and troubles the imposition of bodily discipline and the cult of cleanliness as central to beauty and civilization.

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[30] In drawing attention to cleanliness and dressing habits, Hara's text mobilizes dress as haunted by ghosts of history, not least of which are the conflicts between the representation of Hawaii as a paradise and the relocation of lepers to Molokai. In his discussion of Jack London's short stories set in Hawaii, James Slagel writes that "Koolau the Leper" (1909/1912) is a fictional account of a true event in which the differentiation between the "clean" and "white" from the "filthy" and "disfigured sick" became crucial in fighting leprosy. In 1865, the government legislated an act to set up a settlement on the island of Molokai, in order to "save the race and placate the frightened healthy population" in 1865 (Slagel 178).

In the terms of this discussion, I would go further to argue that the disciplinary power that the school exacts on the contestants represents, to borrow Michel Foucault's terms, hygiene measures to govern "the moral cleanliness of the social body" (*The History of Sexuality* 54). The narrative's emphasis on the "proper routines of skin cleansing and make-up" as a prerequisite of the beauty contest, moreover, puts the debate about images of hygienic, light-skinned femininity and the cosmetic industry into a historical context, echoing the marketing strategy of skin care products of the late 1960s (338).[31] In her discussion of the historical relationship between beauty, marketing, and sales in "On Beauty … and the History of Business," Kathy Peiss asserts that business advertising exacts an influential force on social standards of femininity. Beginning in the mid-1960s, the "California Girl" was characterized by what Noxzema and its advertisers emphasized as "Cover Girl's 'clean makeup'" (14). The beautiful All-American girl was characterized by light skin and a clean, natural look. According to Peiss, advertisements depicting models attired in white against a white background conveyed a message of cleanliness and feminine beauty ideals (14). By revealing how beauty skills involve the application of corrective moisturizer, "Scotch tape," and a "rubber and chrome pincer machine" (339) that is inseparable from discipline and punishment, "Carnival Queen" critically interrogates the ways in which the skin cleansing sessions and makeup skills create what Foucault calls a "regime of truth" in which an arbitrary set of dress habits and ideals of gender and race are deemed legitimate and true (*Power/Knowledge* 131).

The carnival queen event at McKinley High is premised on the idealization of Eurocentric womanhood and is a site designed to exhibit and inculcate popularized social and gender identities. From a Foucauldian perspective, it is possible to read the orientation session as the state's strategic deployment of a regime of expertise legitimatizing the corrective management of racial bodies. As Foucault writes in *Discipline and Punish*, these "calculated methods" of correcting the body that are administered in school "made possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility" (136, 137). Extending Foucault's concept of discipline and control in the multicultural setting of Hawaii, I would argue that to instil discipline of "the proper make-up and attitude" into the beauty contestants in McKinley High actually underwrites the persistent colonization and racialization of the Other in relation to the figure of the ideal citizen subject (338). More crucially, the technology of dress practices functions as part of a larger civilizational discourse about the Japanese American citizen-subject in Hawaii. In order to ensure they are fit for the beauty competition, the girls acquiesce to a technology of discipline through which they are both prescribed correctives and taught to expend strenuous energies on cleansing their skin, a material practice that attempts to reproduce the mimetic ideals of whiteness and femininity. For Hara's narrative, it is safe to say that what constitutes the carnival queen is a mediated U.S. ideal of a particular historical and socio-economic conjunction, reminding us of the persistence of visuality and disciplinary mechanisms of normalizing femininity that interpellate the characters.

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[31] Sam's account of the tubes of white and translucent crème that Mrs Chung gives to the girls connects to an extended questioning of messages on skin care and distinct images of whiteness in which cosmetic manufacturers are invested. In *Hope in a Jar*: *The Making of America's Beauty Culture*, Kathy Peiss notes that Clinique, with its "antiseptic green packaging," became the choice of skin care for feminists and career women in 1967, when it transformed the daily cleansing of skin to a matter of science (262). Peiss writes that mass-market cosmetic firms started to sell "ethnic" make-up after 1970 (263).

Carnival and Pageant

The term "carnival" is an important indicator of Hara's representation of the beauty competition, which is seemingly entertaining, festive, stylish, but in fact interweaves a matrix of discourse on gender and race established in the opening lines of the narrative. Given that the beauty contest is descended from country fairs, dime museums, expositions, festivals, tournaments, and carnivals, the notion of carnival provides a useful frame for a reconsideration of an event that harks back to medieval pageants with the queen dressed in full regalia at her coronation. In many ways, the 1966 Carnival Queen contest, which has the pageantry and all the trappings of medieval fantasies, perpetuates the construction of racial and class hierarchy in which winners can enjoy material rewards. As Pierre Bourdieu posits in *Masculine Domination*, women are assigned the role of producing "signs of distinction," ranging from cosmetics to fashionable clothing (101). In this light, I explore the ways in which the signifiers of costume work, however, in conjunction with the notion of carnival as a political tactic to subvert the technologies of discipline, "signs of distinction," and civilized whiteness. If the U.S. has always thought of itself as in the forefront of progressive movements that characterize its "civilization," Hara's narrative conveys the sense of anachronism which the carnival queen contest intimated.

According to Henri Schindler, American debutantes attired in "beaded and bejewelled mantle" were introduced to society at the carnival courts where a queen and maids of honor were selected (105). All classes put on costumes and take on new identities for festivals, but the ultimate outcome of these events is to sustain the hierarchy of class. "Carnival Queen" demonstrates that it is precisely the annual ritual in McKinley High, the continued restaging of carnival pageants and ball regalia that, in turn, draws attention to what it reinforces, that is, the continued imposition of ideologies of race and gender within the constitution of U.S. civil society. In *Society, Manners and Politics*, Michel Chevalier aligns the structuring of costume parades and festival queen competitions with the management of gender and class (315 – 325). Organizers mobilize festival queens to purportedly show that any beautiful or popular woman can attain social mobility in the U.S. In this respect, "Carnival Queen" articulates the way festival queens exalt a particular construction of national identity that obviates the self-consciousness and alienation that Others like Sam experience. If multiculturalism is a corollary of civil rights struggles, "Carnival Queen" gestures to Hara's concerns regarding multicultural inclusion and exclusion for Japanese Americans. While Sam's description of the Carnival Queen and festival costumes points phantasmagorically to festival queen parades, it critiques the event as a spectacular illusion in which the concept of multiculturalism, which avowedly affirms U.S. cultural pluralism, is actually predicated on privilege and the exclusion of otherness. As Lisa Lowe puts it, "To the degree that multiculturalism claims to register the increasing diversity of populations, it precisely obscures the ways in which that aesthetic representation is not an analogue for the material positions, means, or resources of those populations" (86). "Carnival Queen" undercuts the celebratory mood of the beauty contest by emphasizing how it actually veils a brutal form of material histories of racialization.

It is no accident that Hara locates the contest in a school, a social institution, as a way to illustrate how race is believed to reside in the skin and how the discourse of racial and gender norms and ideals proliferates across a matrix of state apparatuses, particularly the indisputable markings of racial difference on the characters' face and skin in "Carnival Queen." Moreover, given that President William McKinley (1897 – 1901) oversaw the annexation of Hawaii in 1899 and supported American civilizational superiority, it is possible to interpret McKinley High School as an architectural site of institutional and sociopolitical control.[32] Here, as Louis Althusser writes, the "ideological State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly by ideology, but they also function secondarily by repression, even if only ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic" (112). Yet for all the ideology of Americanization, the school is simultaneously a site in which resistance is expressed, as Althusser posits, so that McKinley High becomes a site by which Hara articulates Sam's ambivalence and struggles against the citizenship training, symbolic practice, and the technologies of embodiment that go into the construction of an ideal U.S. citizen.

In his study of Progressive-era education and second-generation children of immigrants, Reed Ueda identifies McKinley High School in Honolulu, with its history of educating Japanese Americans during the 1920s and 1930s, as affiliated with the discourse of "cultivating modern democratic citizenship" (663). Similar to the "Americanization movement" at high schools in the mainland, the core curricula in William McKinley High School was to teach American citizenship, to help construct a "new civic identity," to run English courses, and to support ethnic cultural interests and Japanese language instruction (663 – 664). However, if the history of Americanization through educational training at McKinley High has been predicated on reconstructing an "official, nationalist identity," "Carnival Queen" subverts that developmental narrative by representing the resistance of some of its students to the management of gender identity (664). By depicting Sam and Terry withdrawing from the beauty contest, Hara shows how these two characters fashion a critique and claim authority by standing apart from and above the carnivalesque starch-throwing scene at the carnival fair. This stands in contrast to the Nisei students of McKinley High in 1928. Because of their Issei immigrant parents' experience disenfranchisement and exclusion from "naturalized American citizenship," the Nisei students endeavoured to claim their "birthright American citizenship" by declaring their patriotism, by participating in civic acculturation programs, and by proving themselves as ideal American citizens (662, 663). Far from fully embracing the ideals of the "democratic melting pot" in 1966, "Carnival Queen" depicts Sam and Terry as dissenting voices that challenge their interpellation into the ideology of Americanism in McKinley High (Ueda 672).

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[32] For William McKinley's State of the Union Address, 1900, see <http://www.usa-presidents.info/union/mckinley-4.html>.

To explore the ways in which the carnival queen contest works in tandem with the imperatives of the state to reinforce and legitimatize ideological systems which prevail in the U.S., I trace the usage of the term "pageant" during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Herbert Norris's *Medieval Costume and Fashion* is instructive at this juncture, and even though he does not explore whether costume and pageant could work to contest hierarchies of the day, I want to press on with my inquiry of the ways in which pageantry costume and identity are mutually constitutive.[33] Based on Norris's description of medieval fashion and pageant, I suggest that Hara's narrative questions the assumptions underlying the restaging of pageants for the purpose of crowning an ideal, gendered national subject. As such, both the queen's and princesses' gowns compel a critical attention to the close connection between wardrobe apparatus and the modeling of gender identities. It is evident that, through their "walking and modeling lessons," the contestants learn the normative, social codes of conduct that determine an ideal gender identity (341). Additionally, the exquisite long gowns are designed to impose self-discipline on the body in order that it exercises poise and correct rules of gender behaviour and deportment. Specifically, the story problematizes the discursive and sartorial practices that constitute hegemonic, normative gender and racial identities, and interrogates the logic of this supposedly venerable annual carnival queen contest. That is, the narrative must be understood within a specific history of gender and racial discourse and the carnival contest as stemming from a history of negotiating the contradictions of what Eric Hobsbawm terms the "invention of tradition," while seeking to incorporate the signifiers of costumes and the glamour of pageants into a terrain of diverse ethnic identities. Hobsbawm defines "invented tradition" as "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (1). To refuse to don the signifiers of dress that imply such continuity can be read as a contestation of "invented tradition," power and knowledge, and ideals of gender embedded in the concept of U.S. citizenship.

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[33] "Mystery and miracle plays," also known as "Pageants," provided entertainment on festive occasions such as the return of King Edward I in 1292, a coronation, the reception of a queen-consort, at Corpus Christi, and so forth (Norris 190). References to festival queens are themselves not new in the sense that they can be traced back to the carnivals and fairs of the Middle Ages.

This brings me to one of the central elements of the Carnival Queen contest, in which the coronation gowns are signifiers of class distinction. Consider, for example, the dresses described by Sam and worn by the Carnival Queen and her court, a passage which is worth quoting at length to capture the colour, luminosity, and fairy-tale quality of the description:

> The girls are all dressed in long gowns and are wearing white
>
> The first girl is Linda. She looks so pretty in a moroon velvet A-line gown. Cannot see her musubi-shaped body and her face is just glowing. The rhinestones in her tiara are sparkling under each of the hundreds of carnival lights. The ribbon on her chest says "Third Princess." It's neat! just like my cousin Carolyn's wedding. . . . The next is Trudye. She's not wearing braces and

> she looks so pretty in her lavender gown. . . . The Yanagawa twins. They're wearing matching pink gowns and have pink baby roses in their hair, which is in ringlets. Their tiaras look like lace snowflakes on their heads as they pass by. (348)

Through Sam's sartorial description, the feminine visibility of the Carnival Queen and her Princesses becomes exalted excess. It is instructive to consider the contestants' gowns and tiaras in relation to the "signs" that Arjun Appadurai identifies as constitutive of luxury goods and clothing. In "Commodities and the Politics of Value," Appadurai posits: "we regard luxury goods not so much in contrast to necessities, but as goods whose principal use is *rhetorical and social*, goods that are simply *incarnated signs*" (38; original emphasis). Extending Appadurai's theory of luxury goods to the Carnival Queen contest, I argue that the surpluses of dress signification underscore the construction of an idealized gendered American identity as at once ideologically overdetermined and extravagant.

What Henri Schindler describes for the "mock royalty" of New Orleans' Carnival ball holds, as well, for "Carnival Queen": "The evolution of Carnival dynasties reinforced the royal trappings of the season, each year adding new names to the rolls of regal ancestors" (184). The early paragraphs of Hara's narrative illustrate the legacy of aristocratic élite inscribed in the hall of fame:

> The Carnival Queen contest is a tradition at McKinley. They have pictures of every Carnival Queen ever chosen hanging in the auditorium corridor right next to the pictures of the senators,

> governors, politicians, and millionaires who graduated from the school. This year there are already five portraits of queens up there. (336)

The portraits that Sam describes can be explicated fruitfully in terms of Foucault's notion of "a modality of power" in *Discipline and Punish* (192). Foucault writes: "The more one possesses power or privilege, the more one is marked as an individual, by rituals, written accounts or visual reproductions" (192). And race is an important element in determining who will be inducted into the pantheon of, in Mr Harano's words, "royal representatives of our school" (348):

> All the girls are wearing long ball gowns and the same rhinestone crown which is placed on their heads by Mr Harano, the principal. They have elbow length white gloves and they're carrying baby's breath and roses. The thing is, all the girls are hapa. Every one. (336 – 337)

Here, Hara posits how McKinley High actively mobilizes specific sartorial signifiers and pageant accoutrements to showcase the ascension of students to carnival queens, from hapa to full U.S. citizenship and individuality. In this sense, the narrative presents interesting parallels with Schindler's depiction of aristocratic carnival grandeur and highlights the role of "tradition." In particular, the adjudication of the beauty contest presents interesting parallels with Schindler's depiction. The beauty queen's identity and status are all determined by expert mediators through a conventional process of evaluating her race and gender. What we witness here is an attempt to maintain and reinforce the official celebration of "timeless" truths amendable to institutions of power.[34] The Carnival Queen contest is a costume tableaux that reproduces hierarchizing practices and ideals of femininity and, at the same time, obfuscates the question of race. What the Carnival Queen Leilani further validates is "the image of Hawai`i as a Pacific melting pot" in which the crossover beauty queen serves as a narrative of progress (Yano 60). Reading the costume tableaux as a narrative, the annually crowned queens who exist in syntactical relation to one another, the contiguity of all these carnival queens becomes significant. These beauty queen figures stand as the superior image in the mirror, which has what Sam lacks and, therefore, what she desires but will never attain. The idealized image of femininity—read white—lies as much in a historical past as in 1966. The pictures of past carnival queens on the wall only reinforce this reading, and their presence in the picture display evokes the history and hauntings of race and its symbolic and material violence. In short, the text draws upon the costumed carnival queen contest to stress the notion of what Anne Hollander would describe as the "historical drag" that is central to the event ("Transvestism" 167). It is in this context that the Carnival Queen contest must be seen as a narrative with decidedly political implications, for the historical costumes both "conferred prestige" and indicated "conspicuous division" that go against the grain of democratic ideals and the potential for racial equality (Lurie 120, 121). Thus, Hara's astute deployment of

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[34] In *Symbol and Privilege: The Ritual Context of British Royalty*, Ilse Hayden details the gowns and robes through which court spectacles are created, highlighting the significance of coronation with all its "mythohistorical" motifs that so often "distort[s] time and thereby accentuate[s] awareness of it. They proclaim the continuity of past and present" (110). It is with the Carnival Queen contest and its recuperation of royal robes that the narrative takes issue.

"Carnival Queen" as the title of the narrative is inflected by an ongoing critique of the American impulse to categorize and classify not only via the beauty competition in McKinley High, but also historically via a governmental legislation of U.S. citizenry invoked through the school's name.

Through the representation of the carnival fair, Hara raises important questions about ideal citizenship and identity formation. At the carnival fair, students are permitted to throw starch at the teachers and the principal as an expression of festive rebelliousness. Teachers don "shower caps and stick their heads through holes in the cupboard so students can buy paper cup-cake cups full of starch" to throw at their faces (347). By depicting students' attempts at throwing cupcake cups of starch at the teachers and the principal on the Carnival grounds, the narrative subverts the system of prestige, exclusiveness, and the artificial monarchical order. In the last segment of the story, the Carnival Queen contest ends as the carnival ends:

> The court walks through the crowd and stops at the senior booth. Mr Harano, the principal steps out. "Your majesty," he's talking to Lani, who is really glowing, "I will become a target in the senior booth in your honor. Will you and your Princesses please take aim and do your best as royal representatives of our school?" (348)

As its title presciently indicates, "Carnival Queen" can be theorized in terms of the Bakhtianian notion of carnival. I see the choice of the title as a subversive tactic that seeks to disclose the incommensurability between the impassioned espousal of liberal reforms during the 'revolutionary' 1960s and the pressure to conform to internalized ideologies of beauty. Hara stresses the technologies that enmesh participants and the histories of overdetermined identities remain intact in 1966. In the narrative, however, Hara turns this event to her advantage by bringing into narrative view the equation of the carnival queen's femininity and beauty with elements of laughter and parody, that is, precisely what Bakhtin calls carnivalesque humor, as an inversion of highbrow culture that is characteristic of the carnival.[35] Bakhtin writes that in the carnival setting, "there is a temporary suspension of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers among men and of certain norms and prohibitions of usual life" (15).[36] What Bakhtin characterizes in his work on Rabelais, by way of a folk tradition of reflexive, carnivalesque works, is here reactivated by Hara as a strategy in which the beauty queen is the sum of a web of vested interests that is aimed at keeping in place the essentialist conditions of race and gender identities.

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[35] Henri Schindler notes that in Rome carnival was "celebrated with public debauchery, costumes, cross-dressing, and violence," and in Mardi Gras, carnival was used as a site for public executions and "the settlements of long-standing feuds and vendettas" (*Mardi Gras* 14). In his investigation into the roots of American carnival, Joe McKennon defines carnival as "a collective amusement organization consisting of various shows, riding devices, free acts, exhibitions, and gaming and catering concessions" (*Pictorial History* 19). Strictly speaking, a carnival is not a circus, though it can have a circus as a sideshow.

[36] In *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White are right to point out the limitations of Bakhtin's approach to carnival, which "often violently abuses and demonizes *weaker*, not stronger, social groups—women, ethnic and religious minorities, those who 'don't belong'" (19). While I acknowledge the Bakhtinian formulation of carnival sometimes works to reimpose the status quo, and at other times blast through it, I have chosen to extend the carnivalesque to read "Carnival Queen" as a textual struggle for interrogating standardized definitions of gender identities. Bearing in mind the notion of the carnival as contradictory, fluid, heterogeneous, and open, I modify the carnival and argue that it is a cosmopolitan site where identity is not fixed and where various forms of struggles are of national and transnational interest.

Indeed, Bakhtin's words describing medieval laughter can be applied to the Carnival grounds, which capture the "utopian freedom," "utopian radicalism," and spirit of festive laughter of the description (89): "The air is filled with pink cupcake cups and starch as they throw. Mr Harano closes his eyes, the flashbulbs go off, but no one comes close to hitting his face. Up above us everyone is laughing and clapping" ("Carnival Queen" 348). The chaotic, topsy-turvy "popular-festive travesties of carnival," as Bakhtin would have it, dissolve defining boundaries of social identities to reconnect with the ethnicized student population at large (28). It is precisely the students' laughter that signals a regenerating force and a renewal of hope and aspirations for the future. While carnival ultimately reinstalls the containment of the transgressive force that the students represent, it also belongs to a site that Cornel West refers to as "demystification," which "tries to keep track of the complex dynamics of institutional and other related power structures in order to disclose options and alternatives for transformative praxis" ("The New Cultural Politics of Difference" 31).

Before going further into the Carnival Queen contest, however, I will consider the way in which Hara demystifies the model minority stereotypy. Specifically, what does it mean for Hara to subvert the 1966 Carnival Queen contest at a time when dominant institutions have ascribed particular cultural truths about Asian Americans who have been characterized as the model minority? My intention is not to write off beauty contests but to focus on and reactivate discussion about an American feminine ideal, the materiality of race, the model minority, dress as a signifier of gender and community tradition as well as imagined community in the diaspora.[37] Unfortunately, a good deal of emphasis on the glamour and glitz of beauty pageants, including the logic of material rewards in the form of designer clothes, lucrative modeling deals, business travel, and scholarships, has been of an ahistorical and apolitical propensity.[38] While critics' positive discussions of beauty pageants are helpful in rethinking the ways such competitions can be put to productive use for economic and social benefits, I argue that an interrogation of the ambivalence embedded in the event is very much in order. Here I consider two texts, Edward Iwata's "Race Without Face" and Lois-Ann Yamanaka's "When Asian Eyes are Smiling," that question the social interpellation of the model minority and its abilities of ideological and cultural assimilation, for comprehending the multicultural setting of Hawaii.

Both Iwata and Yamanaka open their stories in a cosmetic surgeon's office. While Iwata's narrator undergoes an operation to alter his facial features in a Beverly Hills medical office, Yamanaka's narrator accompanies her sister, Kala, to have blepharoplasty surgery done by a "top-notch surgeon" in Honolulu

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[37] For an ethnographic discussion of the ways in which beauty pageants afford Asian Americans the opportunity to enjoy upward mobility, see Shirley Jennifer Lim, "Contested Beauty: Asian American Women's Cultural Citizenship during the Early Cold War Era," 188 – 204.

[38] Writing in "Beauty Queens Don't Deserve the Adulation," Diane Yukihiro Chang insists that pageant queens should not be viewed as "role models" and stresses that "beauty contests continue to erode years of progress toward achieving sexual equality" (*Honolulu Star-Bulletin* 8 Mar. 1996). There have been numerous criticisms of Chang's position, ranging from the charge that her arguments derive from outmoded ideas, to an all-out condemnation of her column. I reference Chang's newspaper article here as an insight into the recent situation of the general Hawaiian public with regard to beauty contests.

(173). Kala is not alone in considering blepharoplastics, as "hordes of Asian women" go to "the butcher Korean doctor," who flies into Honolulu twice a year to perform surgery on their eyes (173). In this regard, it is important to recognize the continual signifying of racial and gender bodily image against a backdrop of dominant representations of beauty. Yamanaka's narrative describes how she and her sister learn from homogenizing white film icons: "We all longed for eyes like those of Cheryl Tiegs, Cheryl Ladd, or Natalie Wood, whom we watched in late-night reruns of *This Property Is Condemned*. And we would get those eyes by stretching and pulling and then taping and gluing the skin of our lids back into a self-made fold" (171). Kala would create *haole* eyes for her three sisters by taping their eyes with Scotch tape, thereby temporarily doing away with "seeing-through-venetian-blind eyes, kamikaze eyes, your-ancestor-started-World-War-II eyes, Nip eyes" (172). Iwata's narrator echoes: "I hated being a gook, a Nip" (44). The "tragic Oriental-eye story" that Yamanaka describes parallels Iwata's story in which the internalization of Nordic ideality and its effects are constitutive elements of American gender and national identities. Iwata's graphic account of the plastic surgery the narrator goes through to change his "Oriental" facial features brings into relief the larger implications of racial and gender markings, which are totally at odds with what he calls "the Nordic or Western European ideal" (44).[39] With a $1500 loan from a friend, the narrator asserts: "The flick of a scalpel would buy me respect" (44). Iwata calls attention to the notion of coercive mimesis by invoking a popular "all-male calendar" in his community:

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[39] Does it make sense to think of a nordic ideal when more and more diverse minorities participate in beauty contests? It is worth acknowledging that, in recent years, many ethnic minorities have taken part in and won local, regional, state, and international beauty competitions. The careers and success of Asian American women have been made possible by participating in or winning beauty

> While the men photographed are all respected, the beefcake images they project are caricatures of the white physical ideal: the well-oiled, muscular body, the chiselled face, the hint of male power and violence. They're like minorities in beauty pageants who look more like the blond Miss America prototype than their own race. (47)[40]

In light of Hara's subject, Iwata's analogy is relevant to thinking anew the history of calibration and management of racial and gender identities by various institutional mechanisms of classification, discipline, and surveillance.[41]

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contests. But what gets lost in this transformation from a cohort of predominantly white pageanteers to a panoply of Latina, African, South Asian, and Asian American women in swimsuits and evening wear is the recognition of the problem of uneven opportunity and social inequality. As Jill Neimark, in "Why Need Miss America," makes clear, the "annual ritual" runs on a "fairly inflexible standard of beauty" and state pageants sometimes foot the bill for cosmetic surgery. To put it another way, dominant assumptions about and a set of criteria for identifying the beauty queen still hold sway, and the tension between diversity and racial difference are not easily dismissed.

[40] Current fashion trends and ideals concerning gender certainly bear out Iwata's assertion that men are also under pressure to conform to dominant images of masculinity.

[41] In "'Opening Faces: The Politics of Cosmetic Surgery and Asian American Women," Eugenia Kaw emphasizes the "unequal race relationships" and Asian American women's internalization of race and gender stereotypes (260). Kaw provides a fascinating account of the ways in which the Asian American body is altered and managed based on interviews with Asian American women. In her ethnographic research on Asian Americans' perceived ideal body image in the San Francisco Bay Area, Kaw contends that "the psychological burden of having

If beauty contests were instrumental in providing images of a white American ideal for immigrants in the early twentieth century, then Hara's text demonstrates that the annual Carnival Queen beauty pageant is important in emphasizing an ideal American femininity and citizenship. Iwata points out the cultural ascription of Asian Americans to the position of conformity, an ascription that is reinforced by media coverage of Asian Americans as conforming to model minority stereotypes. Iwata elaborates:

> A century ago, sugar plantation owners in Hawaii counted Asian laborers as part of their business supplies. Today, we're still regarded similarly: as bodies to fill affirmative-action goals, as background in movies. Even worse, we gladly accept what society imposes on us, so anxious are we to measure up to its standards of "success." (51)

The importance of mentioning the conflictual coverage of the model minority stereotype is to take into consideration the ways in which it can be theorized in relation to the assimilationalist motif, the American dream, and the ostensible equalitarianism and legitimacy of "democratic" U.S. institutions. To that end, the connection between subjectivity and community investment in signifiers of race and gender needs to be interrogated in terms more complicated than attributing the participation of ethnic communities to homogenous cohesion. A central concern of this chapter, then, is how Sam and Terry—as Homi Bhabha puts it, "almost the same but not quite" white characters—are connected to the model

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to measure up to ideals of beauty in American society falls especially on these Asian American women" (245).

minority stereotype ("Of Mimicry and Man" 89). Writing in *New York Times Magazine* at the beginning of 1966, William Petersen praises Japanese Americans for their successful transition into mainstream American culture. In December 1966, the *U.S. News and World Report* also published an article presenting Asian Americans as hardworking, disciplined, law-abiding, and culturally privileged citizens in the midst of the civil rights movement.[42] Asian American critics have cautioned against the representation of Asian Americans in these media reports and called into question the disjuncture between the notion of the model minority and specific Asian American issues and histories. Hara implicitly takes up this article in her narrative, in which she demonstrates how the model minority concept supports the interests of U.S. institutions and the dominant ideology, while effacing the lived realities of racialization and the pressures of assimilation.

The Carnival Queen beauty competition calls attention to the dissonance in the dominant discourse and challenges the narrow categories of identities, generally, in the 1960s. In her depiction of bodily display, Hara illustrates the ways in which participation in the carnival queen beauty competition becomes an extension of a national forgetting, an installation of the quintessential model minority, and the consolidation of a nexus of vested interests. The cultural connotations concerning femininity, ethnicity, and clothing signifiers come into view most tellingly in the exchange between the narrator Sam and Terry. In this scene, Sam reacts strongly to Terry's announcement of her withdrawal from the Carnival Queen contest:

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[42] The model minority stereotype has not only been used in conjunction with the Yellow Peril, but it also has been instrumentalized to make legible and discredit other disenfranchised minority groups, especially African Americans in the mid-1960s, which resulted in interethnic resentment and conflict. For an extended meditation on the troubling notion of the model minority, see, for example, William Wong, "Covering the Invisible Model Minority," *The Media in Black and White*, ed. Everette E. Dennis and Edward C. Pease (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1997) 45 - 52; Thomas C. Nakayama, "'Model Minority' and the Media: Discourse on Asian Americans," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 12 (1998): 65 - 73; Stacey Jones, "From Obscurity to Scapegoat," *Editor & Publisher* 130.35 (30 Aug.1997): 7; Joann Lee, "DNC Fund Raising and the 'Yellow Peril'" *Editor & Publisher* 130.22 (31 May 1997): 48 – 49; Chiung Hwang Chen, "'Outwhiting the Whites': An Examination of the Persistence of Asian American Model Minority Discourse," *Race/Gender/Media: Considering Diversity across Audiences, Content, and Producers*, ed. Rebecca Ann Lind (Boston: Pearson Education, 2004) 146 - 153; and Timothy P. Fong, *The Contemporary Asian American Experience: Beyond the Model Minority*, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998).

> "That's nuts, Terry," I am half screaming at her, "you are the only one of us besides Lani that has a chance to win. You could be the first Japanese Carnival Queen that McKinley ever has." I am going to argue this one.

And Sam's outburst is trenchantly refuted:

> "Do you know the real name of this contest?" Terry asks.
>
> "I don't know, Carnival Queen. I've never thought about it I guess." "It's the Carnival Queen Scholarship Contest." (342)

Two points are worth noting here: first, the investment of the beauty contest with racial, communal, and emotional values, including the conflation of beauty queens as standard bearers and ideal signifiers of beauty, femininity, and race; and second, the contest as institutionalized and pre-scripted by officials in positions of authority who fashion and monitor the entire contest in order to contain racialized bodies within existing ideological, social and political structures. Terry sums up the gist of the beauty contest: "We're running because of what we did. But we're going to lose because of what we look like" (343). Indeed, Sam admits that even Krissy, who is "[t]oo haole," is not going to win the contest because of her "looks" (344).

The Carnival Queen contest and, by implication, Mr Harano, are conduits to the circulation of the ideals embodied in the figure of the medieval queen, whose power inheres in her and who stands as a tool of racialization. Despite its ancient roots, the twentieth-century version of carnival still persists and remains largely unchanged. The Carnival Queen beauty pageant is a site whereby technologies of discipline are applied, disseminated, and adjudicated in relation to a standard ideal and whereby students are evaluated in relation to each other. Although the Carnival Queen contest may have been discredited by both Sam's and Terry's withdrawal and by the students' energies, which the school authority cannot contain, Hara is careful not to advocate any easy solution to or flat-out victories in dismantling the regulating ideals governing an annual event that is anchored in tradition. Rather, Hara wants to challenge the disciplining of Asian Americans and the ways Asian American gender is constituted in relation to regulating ideals. As Dawn Perlmutter asks, in the context of crowning Miss America, "*Whose* ideal, whose values?" (155). A few key elements of the concepts of pageant and coronation ritual are most germane to my argument about Hara's narrative interrogation of the representation of beauty, race, and gender identities. Though there, indeed, has been an evolution of sorts in beauty pageants ever since the first Miss America contest was held, "Carnival Queen" raises the implications of race and gender, and especially whiteness, as power in discourses of beauty and femininity, and the strains and tensions of materiality and class mobility.[43] Hara's, Iawa's, and Yamanaka's narratives critically interrogate what it means to strive for an American ideal and the recognition of the allure of and desire for the Nordic cultural ideal. Even perhaps more importantly, they convey the vulnerability of Asian American men and women seeking to clothe and contain their bodies in signifiers of dress and the mediation of surgery in the process of negotiating identities. I would further argue that dress can efface the material history and strenuous struggle of the Asian American body in its attempts to secure competent femininity or masculinity and the U.S. cultural ideal.

The linkage between scholarship, racial minorities, and ideologies of beauty is an important element of the fictional critique I analyze here. I suggest that Terry's and Sam's withdrawal from the carnival beauty contest serves as an act of disidentification, a critical departure that resonates with the embryonic development of Asian America in the late 1960s as an intervention against a U.S. history of racialization. As Diane Mei Lin Mark remarks in "The Reel Hawaii," this was also a time of "renewed ethnic pride among people of color, an exciting

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[43] Certainly in *Undressed for Success: Beauty Contestants and Exotic Dancers as Merchants of Morality*, Brenda Foley is right to assert that "in spite of its historical remembrance as a kind of watershed moment in the feminist movement of the 1960s, and the very real changes made in the public's awareness of its own constructions and impositions of gender, the protest against the Miss America pageant was ultimately ineffective with respect to squelching the kinds of displays that initiated the infamous demonstration. There are more beauty pageants today than ever before, and sexualized female display as entertainment is endemic in American popular entertainment" (182). Indeed, there are all sorts of beauty contest-related sites on the internet, ranging from local festival beauty competitions to international pageants.

Hawaiian cultural renaissance blossomed" (115). Here I want to connect the misrepresentation of Asian Americans as model minorities in 1966 with the management of ethnicities. As I broach the subject of model minority stereotypy, I suggest that it is crucial to factor class into our discussion to refute this fantasy. The conscious deployment of this linkage between model minority and race is indicative of the self-conscious engagement with gender politics of the time, forged in the heat of new literary and social movements. As a "class officer," "sponsor," and winner of the "American Legion essay contest," Terry represents a privileged segment of middle-class model minorities (343). Sam's reaction to Terry's withdrawal from the contest attests to an emphasis upon ethnic pride amongst Asian Americans in the 1960s that had its roots in an awareness of struggles for black liberation in America.

In "The 'Four Prisons' and the Movements of Liberation," Glenn Omatsu maintains that the ideas of the black power movements became a rallying point for Asian American activists and community members to seek "the larger goal of liberation" (165). In the same vein, Russell Leong writes that the concept of Asian America was conceived and spurred on by social movements that swept across America in the 1960s and 1970s. Leong states that the Asian America movement constituted a resistance to a history of racialization and worked with academia toward "community transformation" (vii). Hara's account of the exchange between Sam and Terry suggests that community resides in the bond of friendship. At the Carnival grounds, when Sam reiterates that Terry is "perfect enough to win" the beauty contest, Terry responds with an emotional outburst:

"Perfect, perfect. What if I'm NOT perfect. What if I'm not what people think I am? What if I can't be what people think I am?" (346). Then, Terry continues with a strong self-assertion and plaintive appeal: "Why can't you just like me? I thought you were different. I thought you just liked me. I thought you were my friend because you just liked ME" (346). In just this way, Hara proposes strong friendship, community, and political relationships through which issues of gender and national identities, inclusivity, and justice can be addressed. This notion of community, as Leong describes it, is deemed possible through both Sam's and Terry's friendship and communal bond and their combined refusal to perpetuate a multicultural fantasy in which LeiLani serves as the passing figure of the ideal embodiment of all-American beauty and femininity.

Despite their eligibility to participate, Sam and Terry use the anti-Carnival Queen contest to externalize their protest against both the assimilation into whiteness and promulgation of a national amnesia that the state apparatuses demand of them. While Garbo and Ann-Margret provide what Stacey terms "a mature femininity" and "fantasies of power" that Sam herself lacks and desires, the narrative nonetheless ends with an affirmation of self and of homosocial sorority (158): "And even if I'm covered with starch, I suddenly know that to her, I am beautiful" ("Carnival Queen" 349). This is the moment when Sam demystifies the majestic, white aura surrounding the beauty contest and experiences an awakening. The crucial point is Sam's and Terry's choosing to affiliate with each other, emphasizing the necessity of coalition over participation in a beauty contest that raises the demanding historic question of the relationship between the Carnival Queen and an idealized gender identity in multicultural Hawaii. This invocation of coalition and resistance is important for the way it evidences a sense of their autonomy as well as a refusal to submit to a system that whitewashes the 1960s struggles for racial justice through the Carnival Queen contest, a site of containment and management of race relations in Hawaii.

Hara ends her story in a way that anticipates an unprecedented increase in campus beauty pageants across the globe in the 1980s and 1990s, even while resisting the lure of pageantry. In pointing out this particular moment, I argue that the question of resistance in this story is to expand the very terms of the beauty-pageant discussion by militating against its assumed coherence, that is, the technologies of governance—by means of carnival consisting of clothes and bodies whitened with translucent starch. Read in a Foucauldian sense, this moment represents a way in which regimes of discipline instituted by state apparatuses also enabled forms of agency and critical intervention. Thus the closing moments are not simply a matter of simple resistance to a dominant ideal of femininity, but rather must be understood in terms of how technologies of power produce and regulate subjects. Although the students try to throw starch at Mr Harano, Sam notes that he remains untouched by starch, which suggests that he is never quite fully white despite being the Principal of McKinley High and having been educated and assimilated into whiteness.

Conclusion

Underscoring the displacement of Asian American bodies in McKinley High, Terry and Sam go against the grain of the model minority stereotype by declining to "haolify" themselves, asserting feminist autonomy, unsettling comfortable, traditional boundaries, and challenging essentialist notions of whiteness and femininity that are demonstrated in the Carnival Queen contest.[44] The beauty queen Leilani's body is evoked particularly through her meticulously described dress, which makes her body culturally visible. However, the frequency with which the word "white" is used to designate ideal feminine beauty shows that this epithet helps determine and narrate distinctive national identities. "Carnival Queen" uses dress as a narrative device of representation to focus on the struggles for identity on the part of Japanese Americans in Hawaii, articulating the various ways in which young women long to attain all the ideals of white American womanhood. In effect, the skin cleansing routine, an extension of the whitening process, underscores the inadequacy of Japanese American characters in relation to the ideal embodied in the Carnival Queen. Hara brings to bear not only the constitutive ambiguity of the Carnival Queen contest, including the regime of bodily discipline and oppressive gender ideals, but also the characters' ambivalence about the event. Yet, the text also depicts moments of resistance that coincide with desires for the mainstream culture of ideal beauty and whiteness as well.

The fact that Hara's narrative is set in 1966 is indicative of its radical feminist elements: Hara's contestation of race, gender, and an American feminine ideal, and the presentation of costumed beauty contestants as signifiers of feminine identities speak to the shifts already under way in feminist consciousness. Yet, as Hara shows, the idea of the Carnival Queen contest is always the instrument of the state apparatus to legitimize political action and social regulation. Terry's remarks to Sam at the end of the Carnival Queen contest sums up concisely the communal spirit that is necessary for radical, oppositional politics, that is, a refusal to participate in the beauty contest: "It would have been lonely if I had to quit by myself" (349). At this moment, the narrative gestures to the possibility of a collective resistance against institutional structures like the school to accept the tacit rules of the beauty contest as signs of invented tradition, which has "significant social and political function" (Hobsbawm 307). This act of withdrawal from the contest is also an assertive resistance against the alienation of self in the community. Within the organizing narrative of the story, the school comes to contain the violence of U.S. conquest and control over Hawaii by selecting a crossover beauty queen, which limits and obscures both the history and a reconfiguration of U.S. colonization in multicultural Hawaii.

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[44] I borrow the term "haolified" from Marie Hara's short story, "Working *Haole* House" (215).

I draw on the civil rights movements, including the leadership activism of the Black Panther Party in 1966, as offering analytic insights into interpreting "Carnival Queen," a text that references historical contingencies in relation to the larger history of nationhood and citizenship. "Carnival Queen" does not romanticize the civil rights movements, but rather seeks to re-activate questions of coalition building and concepts of identity as an ongoing politically informed contribution to social justice. Importantly, carnival in the narrative is figured as a locus of bonding among female contestants. Neither a nostalgic return to the

1960s nor a homogenizing impulse, Hara's text takes up the larger question of a model minority in the context of racial hierarchy and speaks to the need for Asian American coalition. For Hara, the point of "Carnival Queen" is the call for a revolutionary moment that has not yet fully happened.

Chapter Three

"My Makeover Life in America": Language, Sartorial Connection, and Bodily Grammar in Chay Yew's *A Language of Their Own* and *A Beautiful Country*

In chapters one and two, I argue that discourses of hygiene and beauty as forms of racialization articulated in *Dogeaters* and "Carnival Queen" demonstrate the key role racial constructions play in fabricating images and understandings of the Asian American. In this chapter, I will take up some of these features of hygiene and beauty in relation to the communal and national sphere where Chay Yew locates a link between sartorial connection and bodily grammar. In *A Language of Their Own* (1994) and *A Beautiful Country* (1998), Yew invokes language, hygiene and beauty, racialized community, and immigrant acts as institutionally linked to citizenship and national belonging.[1] Yew's plays show that race remains important in setting the boundaries of national identity and the definition of "American." While Yew's plays are not about fashion per se, they invoke dress as what Roland Barthes calls a form of language with a vocabulary and a grammar. If Barthes argues that "Fashion behaves like language itself," then we might say that Yew uses dress to "speak an informative language" and produce narratives (15, 18). By taking Roland Barthes' theory of clothing as a

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[1] First premiered in Los Angeles on May 6, 1994, an earlier version of *A Language of Their Own* was presented by Celebration Theatre. On April 20, 1995, the play's original New York production took place at the New York Shakespeare Festival (*ALTO* 121). *A Beautiful Country* was first performed at the Cornerstone Theatre Company in Los Angeles on June 5, 1998, under the artistic director Bill Rauch (*ABC* 169).

"keyboard of signs" as a point of departure, I examine Yew's deployment of clothing signs in *A Language of Their Own* and *A Beautiful Country* to narrate stories of how identity is reconfigured in ways that exceed the concepts of nation and diaspora (257). My thinking about the relationship between dress and language is also inspired by Efrat Tseëlon's theory of speech and dress. Tseëlon's investigation of a "parallel between prescriptions given to the woman with regard to words and garments" suggests to me that the connection between dress and identity is relevant to part of a larger discussion of what constitutes an ideal U.S. citizenship, a constitution that *A Language of Their Own* posits (162). This chapter focuses, then, not so much on clothing as an artefact whose essence and meanings can be read as it does on the study of dress as narrative signs which serve to complicate, as well as offer a way of thinking about, questions of subjectivity, history, and citizenship. In this sense, my primary concern is with epistemological rather than ontological questions embedded in dress.

Yew's plays raise questions about the possibilities and limitations of Barthes' assertion that "clothing is not play but the *sign* of play" (257). More than a sign of play, dress serves as a strategic narrative device in Yew's work to destabilize assumptions about identitarian categories through which American national history has been narrated. Both of Yew's plays militate against American democracy and its idealization as progressive by drawing critical attention to the discourses that constitute citizenship and national community. In addition, both plays feature extended monologues as the act of remembering stories that are connected with the diasporic, linguistic, social, and material realities of immigrating to and living in America.

Speaking of *A Beautiful Country* in relation to the themes running through his plays, Yew explains: "I guess I've always been a closeted Asian American. In actual fact, I'm an immigrant from Singapore. And, like most immigrants when they arrive in America, they either cling on to their past histories fiercely, or co-opt the history of the country they land in. I did the latter. The history and culture of White America through movies, novels, and television" (Román 245). A playwright and theatre director, Yew states that his plays engage with themes, such as the "outsider's place in the world" and "home" (246). Indeed, Yew's *Whitelands* trilogy, which comprises *Porcelain* (1992), *A Language of Their Own* (1994), and *Half Lives*, later reworked and entitled *Wonderland* (1999), cogently stages these themes as well as an ambivalence with identity, sexuality, and family. Permeating Yew's works is the characters' self-consciousness regarding language and locution skills, and a self-consciousness of being in-between original home and home in the U.S. Yew's turn to using devising in the production of political theatre indicates not only his own interest in excavating the history of Los Angeles and Chinatown, but also in finding innovative ways to draw Asian and non-Asian audiences to Asian American theatre (248, 249).[2]

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[2] Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling scribe "devising" as a "process for creating performance from scratch, by the group, without a pre-existing script" (3). American theatre companies, such as Cornerstone Theatre, use "devising" as a "tool for making performance with communities" (135).

In an interview with Asia Pacific Arts about "telling stories of history" Chay Yew mentions that it is crucial for both Asian and non-Asian American audiences to "come and see what the histories are about" ("Talking" par. 14). Moving from dramatizing the stories of two couples in *A Language of Their Own*, Yew staged a collaborative, devising, multimedia performance of Asian American history and storytelling in *A Beautiful Country*. In both plays, Yew challenges us to rethink the disciplining discourse of linguistic assimilation and the conflictual desire for both national identity and transnational belonging at a crucial moment in the policing of citizenship and its attendant rights and privileges. In 1994, California voters passed Proposition 187, termed the "Save Our State" initiative, which would bar undocumented immigrants from any access to public schools and medical and social services. As a crackdown against illegal immigrants, Proposition 187 authorized public service employees to report persons having dark skin or an accent as illegal suspects. According to Sandra Del Valle, the large influx of immigrants, mainly from Mexico and the Dominican Republic, in the early 1990s was comparable to the largest wave of immigration in the early 1900s (247).

In *A Language of Their Own*, the sense of alienation from U.S. society becomes a determinant in the main characters' English language acquisition. The play is divided into two acts with two intertitles: "Learning Chinese" and "Broken English." At the centre of the main plot is the affectional bond between two Asian American characters: Ming, an "American-born Chinese" who "speaks American English," and Oscar, an "Asian male" who "speaks English with a slight, unobtrusive accent" (122). After living together as "the perfect couple" for four years, Oscar and Ming break up. Thinking "it was for the best," Oscar initiates the break up after he tests HIV positive (171). Frustrated by "a new, unspeakable language" and Oscar's silence, which is exacerbated by his illness, Ming moves in with Robert, a waiter at Café Orpheus (160). Meanwhile, Oscar joins a group of HIV positive men, learns "a new language" that is related to medicine, and dates Daniel, a Filipino student in his early twenties and majoring in Business at Harvard (155). Six months later, Oscar invites Ming and Robert to his party. Oscar expresses surprise that Robert is white, whereas Ming notes that he himself has been "replaced by someone younger" (167). In Act II, Ming and Robert move to L.A., while Oscar remains in Boston, and Daniel moves into an apartment close to Oscar. However, Ming and Robert's relationship is in jeopardy because Ming cannot cope with Oscar's advancing illness after the relocation. "Not saying a word," as Robert repeats seven times, Ming becomes more and more laconic, meets other men, and breaks up with Robert (180 – 182). Two years later, Daniel informs Ming of Oscar's passing, but Ming fails to show up at the funeral service. The play ends tentatively with Ming and Robert attempting to reconnect.

At the core of *A Language of Their Own* is a notion of dress as a means of remembering narratives of language learning and the larger history of becoming American. The language of dress and self-transformation that most interests Yew intertextually is evident in *My Fair Lady* and Audrey Hepburn's transformation as a working-class girl who learns to dress well and masters the art of elocution.

Invoking *My Fair Lady* directly, the play troubles Ming's equation of his own transformation and Audrey Hepburn's class and linguistic transformation that is materialized through tutoring and costume. While the play acknowledges the characters' longing to achieve signs of language proficiency and ideal citizenship, it requires us to remember the history of Asian American immigrant acts, public health policy, and communities open to Chinese immigrants as a result of national legal regulations of Asians. I take up the question of how Yew's play self-consciously reveals the issues of power and domination that are negotiated through language. I argue that Yew uses dress as a narrative device not only to underscore the ways in which language is instrumentalized, but also to challenge the notion of a standardized English as a national language in linguistically diverse America.[3]

Devising performance in *A Beautiful Country* can be viewed as a shift in Yew's writing and directorial strategy in theatrical form that occurred over the 1990s. Far removed from the spare, pared down writing and performance style of *A Language of Their Own*, *A Beautiful Country* makes use of the scale of the stage, significant visual flair, and a syntax of speech and sound to re-enact the history of Asian American community and immigration. In my analysis, I locate the significance of *A Beautiful Country* not simply in the staging of 150 years of Asian American history, but also in its rendering of a variety of stories and voices as a way of disarticulating a single, unitary historical narrative. Another important ramification of this reconsideration of U.S. history and national identity through many narratives instead of a single, coherent story is, in Gary Y. Okihiro's phrase, "to rethink our notions of who 'we' are as a people and nation" (xii). Subsequent to thus examining the heterogeneity of Asian American histories and experiences in the plays, I consider how they invoke dress as a narrative device to press for a politically aware and socially committed practice of affiliating across communities. Both plays succinctly illustrate Lisa Lowe's notion of forming "horizontal community with and between others who are in different locations subject to and subject of the state" from the specificity of Asian American immigration history (36).

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[3] Both Sau-ling C. Wong and M. G. López note that economic opportunities in Asia and technological advances, such as internet sites and the media, have resuscitated an interest in learning the Chinese language among second-generation Chinese Americans since the 1980s. In 1994, the institution of the Chinese Scholastic Assessment Test (Chinese SAT II) legitimized the learning of Mandarin, when previously "only European languages were deemed academically respectable" (290). According to a survey conducted by the National Council of Associations of Chinese Language Schools in 1995, only a small number of teachers in Chinese language schools used Cantonese as a medium of instruction (291).

Channelling Desires: Speaking through Audrey Hepburn's Clothes in *A Language of Their Own*

First staged in Los Angeles in 1994, *A Language of Their Own* brings to the fore interlinked issues of language, community, nationality, and sexuality that point to larger negotiations and struggles with citizenship and identity. These concerns, I argue, are the core of the play's relevance to questions of race, class, language, national origin, and citizenship. More specifically, what does it mean for the protagonists, Oscar and Ming, to achieve a high level of proficiency in

American English and for Ming to speak "proper English"? How does Yew's play interrogate English as the official language that defines U.S. national identity, and, by extension, an idealized nation? If "the administration of citizenship was simultaneously a 'technology' of racialization and gendering," as Lisa Lowe describes U.S. immigration laws, what is the relation between citizenship and language? (11). How does the play stage nuances of complicity in and resistance to contemporary debates surrounding language and American national identity? Taking dress as a point of departure, I explore how the play elaborates ambivalence, melancholy, and pain as central to learning English and becoming American for Oscar and Ming.

In his interview with Yew, David Román comments: "*A Beautiful Country*, which is so much about Asian American history and culture, seems to be a major departure from your earlier plays, which focus on the intimate relations between and among people" (245). I would agree, but I would also point out that *A Language of their Own* can be read as a play that does not divest intimate relations from the larger questions of sickness in relation to the health of the national body politic. The idea of interventionist theatre has been a grounding premise of Yew's cultural productions since the 1990s. For Nancy Cho, Yew's intervention is more limited than I see it; she argues that *A Beautiful Country* "seems to mark itself as 'Asian American' much more overtly than some of Yew's other works, such as *Porcelain* and *A Language of Their Own*, which primarily highlight issues of sexuality" (74). However, *A Language of Their Own* goes beyond romanticizing political affiliations and communities of interest based on shared identifications, such as race, sexuality, gender, language, and national origin, but rather raises questions about relations of power and domination within the U.S. through language acquisition by focusing on relations between partners, between father and son, and between members of a community. These concerns can be critical for improving and strengthening the work of political affiliation, and collective resistance against structures of inequality and oppression for diasporic communities. Importantly, Yew's goal is to critically examine these concerns in both plays.

While the words "community" and "multiculturalism" have had widespread currency in the 1990s, the play cautions that we cannot afford to take the celebratory aura that is associated with these terms for granted. Even though *A Language of Their Own* may be seen as a work that ruminates on emotional feelings and language, what stands out is the manner in which it alerts us to the relation between late-nineteenth-century public health discourse and the racial logic embedded in contemporary representations of Asian Americans. In other words, early national political and legislative policies on citizenship not only spill over from the past, but also illuminate the complicated linguistic and social issues facing the characters nearly a century later. Furthermore, in an interview Yew elaborates upon the connection he sees between language and colonialism: "When I was young, I was in Singapore, where I come from, and a theater company was interested in giving me work. At the time, I had done a lot of British plays and American plays. Being colonial, we always did those plays -- when we saw ourselves doing *Elephant Man*, it was so weird because there was Asian people putting on English accents" ("Talking" par. 12). Thus, *A Language of Their Own* is also Yew's response to the legacies of former colonial countries such as Singapore and their haunting of Asian Americans through English language acquisition and mastery, such as the character Oscar. What are the stakes in thinking of dress, language, and citizenship for this play? Dress in the play, I suggest, functions as a second skin that facilitates lexical entry into citizenship and immigration history. Dress in this sense is art of learning from Audrey Hepburn in *My Fair Lady*, a film that Oscar and Ming watch again and again, so that the act of dressing right is analogous to the acts of speaking right and looking right. Ultimately, these acts are entry points to citizenship. Although Hepburn died in 1993, her fashionable image has been an enduring sign.

In Act One, Ming credits his growth and self-awareness to Hepburn's film: "I think *My Fair Lady* was pivotal in my life. It taught me how to speak proper English, appreciate good clothes, and made me realize I was gay" (131). Ming's account of his imagining being like Hepburn is especially worth thinking about because it suggests that she was not just an embodiment of Englishness and fashion, but, crucially for Asian Americans, a dress signifier of interconnection. What I have in mind is the convergence of affinities, that is, the language of dress and class that the fashionable icon Hepburn signifies. The issue of language competence and its association with national identity is certainly not new in the U.S., going back as early as the seventeenth century.[4] Since the late 1960s, languages have been the focal point of heated discussions in American schools, which saw the ban on bilingual education in many states and the superseding of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 with the English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act of 2001.[5] In the aftermath of the 1960s civil rights movement, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to prohibit discrimination against southern blacks based on the

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[4] In 1906, the question of English literacy necessary for the naturalization of immigrants again became the subject of considerable debate. To be naturalized and become a citizen, immigrants were required to pass an English test. With the

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advent of World War I, national anxieties about immigrants from southern and eastern Europe led to the passage of the Literacy Act of 1917, a measure to restrict the entrance of "illiterate races" (Carnevale 478). The Literacy Act of 1917 required all adult immigrants over 16 to write a literacy test, an instrument used to gauge prospective citizens' ability to "acquire English and the superior traits associated with the 'English-speaking races;" (Carnevale 478). In addition, this immigration act barred the entry of Asia-Pacific Triangle aliens. After World War I, the U.S. government promoted the Americanization movement by implementing a wave of campaigns like the English-only movement in schools. One of these Americanization campaigns from 1918 to the early 1920s included "language loyalty oaths" and the "Good English Makes Good Americans" campaign, which rewarded students who policed their classmates' English language competency (Baron 155).

[5] Because early English-speaking colonists and Americans were suspicious of Native American languages, which were considered inferior, English language became the national language for the formation of the U.S. and a national identity. In the 1600s, missionary schools were set up and English language was used as a means to civilize and redeem Native Americans from their barbarism. This policy of linguistic domination was lifted in 1934 with the passing of the Indian Reorganization Act, permitting Native American tribal self-government, and in 1992 with the passing of the Native American Languages Act, allowing the speaking of Native American languages in schools (NCELA, http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/policy/legislation/2_enacted.htm, 20 July 2007). In the eighteenth century, German was the first language of two-thirds of the German immigrant population residing in Pennsylvania, prompting Anglo-Saxon America to preserve the English language as an official language and a symbol of American democratic ideals (Baron 65 – 71). In the nineteenth century, the "common school" was established to Americanize both Irish and German immigrants (Olneck 205).

grounds of language and education.[6] Despite the liberalization of immigration laws and English language requirements since 1965, linguistic anxieties were still prevalent in the U.S. with high levels of immigration in the 1980s and 1990s.[7] Between the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a surge in immigration into the United States, prompting Congress to pass language restrictive legislation in an effort to control illegal immigration. Assia Djebar sums up what is at stake rather well: "identity is not made up only of paper or blood but also of *language*" (20).

Responding to political events and federal policy on language learning of the 1980s and 1990s, *A Language of Their Own* anticipates the intense debate on

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[6] Since the late 1960s, languages have been the focal point of heated discussions in American schools, which saw the ban on bilingual education in many states and the superseding of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 with the English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act of 2001. In 1968, the U.S. government passed the Bilingual Education Act, legislation that established transitional bilingual programs to help Spanish-speaking children of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans to learn English. As Nancy C. Carnevale notes, language issues have become the subject of heated debate during periods of mass immigration, demonstrating that language is a site for articulating "cultural anxieties and insecurities" (483). Not only were Americans resisting ethnic Americans' reassertion of their cultural identities through native languages, Hispanic Americans, who were afraid that their children might be economically and socially disadvantaged by linguistic barriers, also opposed bilingual education programs. This is evident in the eradication of bilingual education in California in 1998 (482).

[7] To accord constitutional privilege to English, Senator Samuel I. Hayakawa of Hawaii introduced the English Language Amendment (ELA) and founded the organization, U.S. English, in 1981. Hayakawa, a semantics professor, claimed that English classes enable immigrants to acquire "the social imperatives of being an American, the attitudes and customs that shape the American personality, the behaviour that makes a good American citizen" (qtd. in Baron 56). While Hayakawa's constitutional amendment to outlaw the use of languages other than English in governmental services failed to pass, 23 states passed statutes establishing English the official national language during the late 1980s and early 1990s; see *U.S. English, Inc.*, http://www.us-english.org/inc/default.asp 1 Mar. 2007).

Ebonics in 1996 and the House of Representatives' attempt to pass the 1996 HR bill 123, a measure to legislate English the official language of the United States because of the "linguistic/cultural threat" posed by Spanish speakers (Carnevale 482).[8] In 1997, California voters passed Proposition 227, "English for the Children," an anti-bilingual education legislation to reassert the English language as the official state language and the national language (Del Valle 247). Importantly the play interrogates the historical relationship between language and national citizenship in the U.S., especially the ways in which linguistic fluency symbolizes patriotism or what Baron terms "true Americanism," including how standardized English underwrites power relations within Asian American communities (7). With the 1998 passage of Proposition 227 in California, both *A Language of Their Own* and *A Beautiful Country* can be read as works that reactivate questions of investments in English language learning in light of the rhetoric of multiculturalism and demographic changes. *A Language of Their Own* draws on the historical events pertaining to English language acquisition, the national ideal, and U.S. citizenship to which it bears witness.

Pierre Bourdieu's anthropological work on the imposition of a nation state's official language as "the only legitimate language" proves particularly salient for Yew's play (45). Bourdieu's main argument is that the official language is connected to "the making of the 'nation,'" and that the "state language becomes the theoretical norm against which all linguistic practices are objectively measured" (48, 45). For Bourdieu, assimilation into a unified "linguistic community" serves as "the condition for the establishment of relations of linguistic domination" (46). In the context of Yew's play, standard English competency is tantamount to a speaker securing "linguistic capital," which "retranslates" the symbolic order of social differences into "a profit of distinction" (55). Moreover, linguistic capital enables the acquisition of symbolic profit, for "utterances" are "signs of wealth" and "signs of authority" (66). Distinction and legitimate correctness are, therefore, elements that constitute "linguistic excellence" (60). Bourdieu maintains that the inequalities and uneven distribution of legitimate language competence also contribute to competitive linguistic struggles.[9] For *A Language of Their Own*'s Ming to master the official language is to gesture to his ability to take part in what Bourdieu would call "the 'superiority' of the 'superior' language" (68). What then, do *My Fair Lady* and Audrey Hepburn's character mean for Ming? While Hepburn's linguistic authority is located in her body, it is Beaton's designer clothes that further established her upper-class English accent, whiteness, and European aesthetics. In the play, Ming puts on clothing designed by Cecil Beaton and attempts to emulate Audrey Hepburn, a style icon who embodies beauty and ideality seemingly distinct from broader questions of race, gender, and class.[10] This is hardly surprising, given Hepburn's status as a star and signifier of an idealized feminine identity, which is linked to high fashion. What can Yew's play tell us about the racial, social, and cultural construction of identities by invoking Audrey Hepburn and Cecil Beaton?

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[8] When the Oakland School Board officially acknowledged Ebonics, also known as African American Vernacular English (AAVE), as a language and sought funding in order to teach American Standard English to African American students in 1996, it sparked a vociferous national debate. Critics, including African Americans, argued that Ebonics was a "linguistic style" rather than a language (Carnevale 482).

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[9] According to Bourdieu's definition, legitimate competence "is the statutorily recognized capacity of an authorized person – an 'authority' – to use, on formal occasions, the legitimate (i.e. formal) language, the authorized, authoritative language, speech that is accredited, worthy of being believed, or, in a word, *performative*" (69 – 70).

Given that Hepburn never held American citizenship, Donald Spoto emphasizes, she was never an American actress. Whereas eighteen of Hepburn's films were made in Europe, eleven films were produced in Hollywood. Even though U.S. audiences "wanted Audrey to be American," Spoto stresses that "she was in every way a European woman" (309). While Hepburn did not "seem quite English to the British," Spoto maintains, U.S. audiences were drawn to her

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[10] Audrey Hepburn was arguably one of the most prominent and discussed Hollywood icons in the 1990s and has recently been invoked in popular ad campaigns for GAP. Hepburn has been written about and reviewed by academics, journalists, and film critics, as her image has been remobilized in DVDs, greeting cards, fashion, style magazines, and photo exhibitions. In a recent book-length study, *Growing Up with Audrey Hepburn* (2002), Rachel Moseley observes that her 1990s interviewees understood Hepburn as "real and authentic" (185). Given Moseley's detailed, wide-ranging research, it makes sense that her interest in attending to both text and audience would lead her, theoretically and ethnographically, to an inquiry into race. Instead, she writes: "The study engages less with questions of race, largely because of the 'whiteness' of my interview sample. Nevertheless, as I discuss in Chapter 1, the significance of the 'whiteness' of this project, and of the star around whom it is focused, should not be underestimated" (7). In "Conclusion: the Multi-cultural Question," Stuart Hall makes clear that there "has been a 'black' presence in Britain since the sixteenth century, an Asian presence since the eighteenth" (218). Hall adds that beginning in 1948, the flow of immigrants from the Caribbean, the Asian sub-continent, East Africa, and the Third World has "challenged the settled notion of British identity" (218). Thus this "black presence" has been central to articulations of British whiteness, so that Moseley's "excuse" misses a central point about the whiteness she claims results in an acceptable critical elision, so to speak. As Moseley's data were collected in 1996 and 1997, and as "whiteness" in 1950s Britain continued to resonate in the 1990s, it is incumbent on us to address Audrey Hepburn's image in relation to race and national identity.

"understated European elegance" and her mystique as a "girl-woman" (308, 309). Hubert de Givenchy designed Hepburn's wardrobe for *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961), a film that catapulted her to the stature of a fashion icon. These formulations of Hepburn point to the gendered and racialized notions of embodying the commodified image of an international female fashion icon. Though Hepburn was apparently a "standard and model of elegance and vogue" in the U.S., I would assert that it was only her European feminine subjectivity that garnered this accolade among U.S. audiences (203).

Beaton, the costume designer and photographer of *My Fair Lady*, lavished praise on Hepburn in the 1954 November issue of *Vogue*: "It is always a dramatic moment when the Phoenix rises anew from its ashes. For if 'queens have died young and fair,' they are also reborn, appearing in new guises which often create their own terms of appreciation…. But it took the rubble of Belgium, an English accent, and an American success to launch the striking personality that best exemplifies our new Zeitgeist" (qtd. in Ferrer 85 – 86). Beaton declares that Hepburn "gives every indication of being the most interesting public embodiment of our new feminine ideal" in the aftermath of World War II (87). Raised in a middle-class Hampstead family, Cecil Beaton was "a 'self-created' genius," "a total self-creation," and "an establishment figure" (Vickers xxiii, xxix, 292). Specializing in "'particularly English' portraits," Beaton was designated a royal photographer from 1939 to the 1970s (196).[11] Keenly interested in theatrical performances and in staging, retouching, and beautifying his portraits of high society women, as well as himself, Beaton positioned himself as a civilized, knowledgeable, tasteful fashion designer and photographer. Not only did he transform women into icons of high society and aristocracy comfortably ensconced in the trappings of high culture, but he also fashioned an international image of the British monarchy, whose portraits were intrinsic to Britain's public relations (475). In 1965, Beaton won two Oscars for *My Fair Lady*, one for colour costume design and the other for colour art direction.[12]

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[11] A costume and set designer, writer, and photographer, Cecil Beaton (1904 – 1980) was employed by British *Vogue* in 1926 as an illustrator and, in 1927, fashion photographer. In 1928, Beaton took fashion photographs for American

If Beaton's ideological view of beauty and femininity was associated with aristocratic, Victorian and Edwardian fashion, this would mean reading his desires and fantasy in terms of its material reality. Beaton's investment in the power of dress signifiers enables particular, and important, elements of *A Language of*

Vogue, as well as portraits of film stars for Condé Nast's *Vanity Fair*. In 1938, Beaton was dismissed from *Vogue* for adding anti-Semitic slurs to a sketch of New York society. In any case, he hobnobbed with and took portraits of rich and stylish high-society women. Peter Conrad describes Beaton as "a climber and a snob" who "longed for acceptance by a society that existed only in his imagination" (64). During World War II, he was commissioned by the British Ministry of Information and the Royal Air Force to capture images of the war in Africa and East Asia, including taking portraits of illustrious military leaders and politicians.

[12] Beaton's costume design garnered him Academy Awards for *Gigi* (1958) and *My Fair Lady* (1964). He also won a Tony award in 1957 for his costume design for the American stage version of *My Fair Lady*, a musical starring Julie Andrews and Rex Harrison. Julie Andrews, who called Beaton "quite a taskmaster in terms of what he wanted," once passed out after multiple costume fittings (Vickers 390). The New York version of the musical not only showcased Beaton's Ascot fashion, but also "popularized pointed shoes, billowy blouses and established a craze for chiffons" (395). For the Hollywood version of *My Fair Lady*, Beaton created Audrey Hepburn's ball gown by copying a Gaby Deslys' design in the Los Angeles Museum, which was "quite as beautiful as snow and ice on trees in Switzerland" (463).

Their Own to emerge with clarity. For Beaton, clothes "did not so much make the man as supersede him" (Conrad 60). His costume and stage production designs in *My Fair Lady* thus intersected with work that had been ongoing since 1928, when he declared that design had a "utopian mission," and "clothes were aids to instruction, instruments of reform" (59). With the help of his clothes, he reinvented both himself and his subjects, always "constructing Arcadias" (65). Significantly, the title to the filmic adaptation of Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion*, *My Fair Lady*, foregrounds the linguistic cross-dressing in which Hepburn engages. I read Yew's reference to Beaton's designer clothing, a signifier of "Englishness," by making explicit how the designer's sartorial hallmarks work to recreate a visual wardrobe heavily invested in glamour and English articulacy, a utopia made possible by staging the nostalgic past and high society tableaux through dress. Yew's play shifts our attention to questions of colonial legacy, race, and gender through these references, rather than offering totalizing assumptions of ideal subjectivity that universalizes what are actually expressions of national ideality.

In the language learning process, Ming is participating in racial crossing through fantasy and identification in ways similar to the crossing in which Hepburn engages, under the tutelage of Professor Higgins, by performatively reconstructing her class and gender identities. Once Hepburn's femininity, class, accent, and locution are reconfigured, the next stage in putting the finishing touches to the spectacle is donning the Ascot hat and tight-fitting ball gown. The Ascot dress coupled with Hepburn's assertive determination performs a crucial function in enabling her to transgress class boundaries. By wearing the visually spectacular Ascot fashion, Hepburn becomes a fair lady, a vision that reminded Beaton of "Lily Elsie and the Snow Princess" (Vickers 463). If Hepburn's ravishing Ascot hat "was a masterpiece of architectural construction," I would suggest that her Ascot gown can be read as an architectural frame, a style and design, that is critical in reproducing her class and gender identities (463). While the ball gown sets in motion Hepburn's crossover identities, the architectural design poses a challenge to physical mobility. As such, the play shows that Beaton's redesigned Hepburn is like a mannequin fabricated in specially designed outfits. Wearing Beaton's strategically designed Ascot fashion, Hepburn is structured as a spectacle that serves to reinstall race, gender, class, and linguistic hierarchies of power in the narrative film. Meanwhile, Marni Nixon was "ghosting the vocals" for Hepburn's singing in the film (Braun par. 1). As such, Hepburn's "transformation" undercuts any possibility of a "real" woman. Instead, the signs of dress, locution, and singing underscore Hepburn's morphing into a Pygmalion sculpture.

At first glance, it might seem self-defeating that Yew's characters depend on Hollywood icons who are racially privileged for moments of self-identification and imitation. Yew's play, I argue, demonstrates that the filmic adaptation of Shaw's *Pygmalion* works as a technology of self-fashioning that interweaves the narratives of excelling in English language use with the loss of Chinese language and the acquisition of a language of mourning. Through instructions on dress, social etiquette, and pronunciation, Hepburn is instrumentalized to secure both

Professor Higgins' fantasy as well as Beaton's desires and nostalgic visions of women playing their "traditional exhibitionist role," to use Laura Mulvey's term (425).[13] More than anything, however, it is Ming's declaration of his sexuality that has the potential to subvert the Pygmalion narrative, contesting its heteronormativity. It is possible to think of the narrative device of dress in the play as a signifier of identities, through which Ming desires to make his body literate in the language of class, dress, and gender and thus, in Kaja Silverman's term, "culturally visible" (189). After all, Silverman writes, "clothing is a necessary condition of subjectivity—that in articulating the body, it simultaneously articulates the psyche" (191). From this, it follows that identity—cultural, linguistic, gender, and sexual—is the result not only of an imposition of a "standard language" by the state, it is also the outcome of mimicry and impersonation. Hepburn's transformed identities are made visually available through her acquisition of an upper-class accent and Beaton's designed fashion, both of which register what Silverman would call "in advance a certain shape and stance" (189).

According to Silverman, "vintage clothing" operates as a "highly visible way of acknowledging that its wearer's identity has been shaped by decades of representational activity" (195). In this light, *A Language of Their Own* invokes Beaton's designs in *My Fair Lady* in order to remember the history of racialization and cultural imperialism that embed the constitution of American identities. Significantly, large numbers of immigrants come to the U.S. from countries that were previously British colonies, and the Englishness of Beaton's designs recalls British imperialism and its discourse of race. This otherwise interior depth of Britain's imperial interests in Singapore and China is what the play seeks to remember through its narrative investments in Beaton. In other words, Ming, Oscar, and their parents bring Britain along, carrying a British imperial past into their negotiations in a U.S. present and its power relations. By presenting Ming's and Oscar's education, the play makes explicit the violence involved in their conflictual negotiations with the larger framework of a U.S. history of exclusion by way of race, class, gender, language, nation origins, and sexuality. Consider the salient moments in which the play portrays the brutality that attends Ming's and Oscar's yearning for assimilation into a U.S. cultural imaginary.

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[13] According to Martin Harrison, Beaton may seem to be the "archetypal effete fashion photographer," but his relationship with fashion photography was at times "quite dramatically stormy" (24). Besides calling his models "silly cows," Beaton had sadistic fantasies of illustrating women involved in car accidents and covered with blood (24).

In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault posits that the "individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an 'ideological' representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called 'discipline'" (194). In Yew's play, learning standard English does represent a site wherein a disciplinary power acts on and carves out ideal gender and class identities. The play's allusion to *My Fair Lady* and its star Audrey Hepburn calls attention to the régimen and tactics of disciplinary practices used to instruct and outfit her character by Professor Higgins' exacting standards. Femininity, as Butler maintains, is "the forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment" (232). Unlike the film, Yew's play, however, emphasizes the construction of subjectivity as bound to institutional ideologies of race, language, and sexuality.

While *My Fair Lady* narrativizes fantasies of transformation and social mobility, I argue that Yew's play uses the coming-out narrative of the film to keep us aware that linguistic acquisition and an active participation in material consumption do not necessarily lead to romantic happiness or unproblematic communal filiations. Two things are immediately noteworthy here. First, English language, the very means that Oscar and Ming use to empower and refashion themselves, is embedded in racial difference and citizenship. Pertinent to my discussion is the composite stereotype, the "essential" quality of the Asian American subject that is reinscribed by both Oscar and Ming. Consider the stereotypical manner in which Oscar and Ming use race to characterize cultural and linguistic Asian Americans:

> Ming: He's not good at expressing his feelings.
>
> Oscar: You know the reason.
>
> Ming: You're Chinese. You're supposed to be lousy at expressing yourself.
>
> Oscar: Words don't come easily. (131)

Oscar's and Ming's proficiency in English language, however, fails to correspond to their romantic expectations, nor does it equip them to deal with Oscar's illness. "We had nothing to say to each other," Ming wryly remarks (140).

Second, alongside his mastery of the English language, Ming attempts to reclaim Chinese cultural identities by acquiring a Chinese name. Barthes's notion of the "dream of identity (to be *oneself*, and to have this *self* be recognized by others)" can further our understanding of the significance of naming in Yew's play (255; original emphasis). For Barthes, women who put on dresses have names that serve to "preserve identity" (256). In asides, both Ming and Oscar convey their thoughts on the linkage between the lexicon used in naming and identity. Ming says, "About his name. Oscar. Asians always pick out the most curious and most discarded English names from books and TV. Like Cornelius. Elmo. Wellington. They do it to assimilate into the American culture" (147). Oscar explains, "Oscar is easier to pronounce. I've had my Chinese name massacred all too frequently by strangers and friends. And his name? Ming. It's not even his real name. He picked up a Chinese name because he wanted to be in touch with his cultural roots. Picking up a name is not like picking up a culture" (147). The correlation between language, naming, and cultural roots not only gestures to Ming's conscious affiliation with his own cultural identity, but also the ambivalence embedded in the naming choices. While Oscar views Ming's taking a Chinese name as a simplistic gesture to assert self-belonging, Ming's self-selected name can be interpreted as a continual renegotiation of identities in the face of competing categories of race, class, language, and nationality. I may even go so far to say that his chosen Chinese name "Ming" (□), which can be translated as clarity and light, signifies a sense of hope, or what Barthes calls "a dream of identity," and Oscar's name carries the trace of loss; together so they form the ambivalence of the Asian immigrant subject within narratives of "America" (256). As evident in the closing scene, Ming tells Robert that he has been "getting help" (227).

Much of the play seeks to explore not only the learning of the standard language, but also the inability to communicate that comes with the displacement of subjectivity resulting from that education. Despite their different views, both Oscar and Ming make clear in their monologues their sense of cultural alienation, linguistic dissonance, and feelings of debasement that estrange them from U.S. society. Significantly, the play substantiates Oscar's and Ming's complete opposition and the transformation of their relationship to language as a melancholy of identity. At the party, Ming's changed behaviour baffles Oscar completely: "I thought you always liked confrontations. Wanted me to express what I was feeling," to which Ming replies: "I—have changed." Ming's response is followed up by Oscar's rhetorical phrase: "Become more Chinese?" (171). When Oscar asks whether Ming would like to rekindle their relationship, Ming replies:

> We can't go back to the way things were and make everything all right. It's like learning Chinese. Once I started speaking English, I stopped learning how to speak and write Chinese. I dropped my culture for another. And you can't go back. Only forward. And every now and then, you'll remember a few phrases, a few words, the names of a few Chinese dishes. It sounds a little vague, a little

> romantic. But the language escapes you because you let it go. It's like learning Chinese. Learning to be Chinese. (174)

Ming's change can be interpreted as his mourning for a lost relationship and his continual state of estrangement from his own culture and language. In Act Two, Ming's linguistic assimilation not only disables any communal bond, but also throws into relief his inadequacy in speaking the language of healing. Yet, the play offers an alternative through its conflicting imperatives, which range from containment to liberation, that themselves exemplify a central problematic of the equation between Ming's desire for perfect English diction and an American ideal. Moreover, the focus on Ming's language breakdown works to resist the narratives of progress associated with *My Fair Lady*, and indicates a shift in representational strategies that view Asian American characters as conflicting, complex agents. Yew's staging of Ming's received ideas of English learning is comparable to Sau-ling Cynthia Wong's study of Chinese American linguistic assimilation: "Chinese immigrant students, being members of not only a visible minority in this country but also one with a long history of denigration and discrimination, are often made to feel their Chinese linguistic and cultural background as a source of shame" (208). Wong adds that Chinese immigrant students use different "coping strategies" for dealing with the pressure to learn English language as well as "situations of linguistic discrimination" (208).[14]

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[14] Wong comments insightfully on the distinction between native-born and foreign-born Chinese Americans in the formation of Chinese American community. I find Wong's emphasis on "nativity" useful in describing *A Language of Their Own*, insofar as it captures the sense of linguistic heterogeneity in the Asian American community (199).

Yew's play, nevertheless, does not leave unchallenged the power of English language on which American identity and citizenship is based. This entails questioning the larger move of governmental policy to reinforce language proficiency, integrating the individual and familial into the larger frame of the national community.

Upon examining two crucial father figures invoked in the play, the figure of the father of Hepburn's character and Oscar, whose father is represented as a violent Higgins figure, it becomes possible to gain insight into the possibilities and limits that can be afforded by linguistic ability, self-fashioning, and national identities. Yew's play profoundly registers the troubling reality of literacy and linguistic evolution in an arresting moment when Oscar weaves images of language learning and whiteness together that raise questions about the mastery of English language from the point of view of the family and the nation. Olneck writes: "Today's immigrants recognize the imperative to learn English, and a substantial majority agree that learning English should be obligatory….Among immigrant youth, becoming or being American is equated with being able to speak English" (212). "Immigrant parents," Olneck elaborates, "do not want anything to stand in the way of their children learning English" (213). Even Oscar's failure to grasp his tenses correctly takes on a racialized tone. The whiteness of the "white cream" that covers his injured eye, sustained in a beating by his father, symbolizes a linguistic assimilative ideal that is never fully attainable by racialized subjects. Here, Yew locates standardized American English, the performance of linguistic competence, and their centrality to racial formation in whiteness itself. Whiteness as a constructed identity, a perfection of English language, and an ideal of national identity is also perverse:

> My father used to beat me with his fists, when I didn't get the perfect grade in school. Once I failed English. I was ten. I didn't understand my tenses—couldn't get them right—got them all mixed up—past, present, perfect, continuous. That night, with a whip in his hand and the test paper in another, my father caned me. And in a consuming rage, he struck me in the left eye. The next day, I went to school half blind. My left eye was covered with a patchy white cream. The pain didn't bother me. The embarrassed, silent looks from my friends did. Fighting and violence didn't solve a thing even if I got an A in my next English test. Now, I correct my father's English. Most of the time—deliberately. (127)

Here, the play shows the pressure Oscar's father, who knows the privileges and rights that the English language proffers, exerts on his son. This is a point that goes back to Olneck's discussion about the relationship between national identity and speaking English. By demonstrating that race is still a primary site of "difference," despite the demographic shift of the 1990s when U.S. national identity comprised minorities and immigrants from non-European countries, the play unmasks the perpetuation of violence, self-contradictions, and ambivalence that inform its characters' aspirations and negotiation with language and self-fashioning.

Ming describes how he perfects his elocution, and by extension, accomplishes an identity transmutation via the exteriority of the self-as-Audrey Hepburn, by watching *My Fair Lady*. By calling attention to Cecil Beaton's designer clothes, and by including Audrey Hepburn, *My Fair Lady*, and also Mary Tyler Moore as referents for role models in his play, Yew hardly effaces Ming's identification with Hollywood screen icons and celebrity designers, but it is the further insertion of news "stars" like Connie Chung in the play that lend authority to Ming's eloquence. Connie Chung's career as a news anchor emerged at a particularly significant moment.[15] In 1993, Chung became the first Asian American and second woman to clinch both the co-anchor job of the "CBS Evening News," a post touted as the "pinnacle of broadcast journalism," and anchor of "Eye to Eye with Connie Chung," a Prime-time news magazine.

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[15] She began work as a copywriter and on-air reporter at WTTG-TV in 1969. Hired as a CBS news correspondence in 1971, and in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement, Chung was the most recognizable Asian American face on American television screens. In 1976, Chung was the nightly news anchor at KNXT-TV (now KCBS) in Los Angeles, as well as television's highest paid anchorwoman. In 1983, she became NBC Prime-time News anchor and a regular correspondent. At NBC, Chung achieved celebrity status for her tabloid-style interviews of celebrities and, before leaving NBC for CBS in 1989, major networks bid against one another for Chung's services. After her controversial television interview with Mrs Kathleen Gingrich in 1995, Chung was demoted and subsequently dismissed from her post (Karen De Witt, "The 104th Congress: The Speaker's Mother; Quick Indignation After CBS Interview," *New York Times* 5 Jan. 1995, 1 Sept. 2007 <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=990CE3DB1E3EF936A35752C0A963958260&n=Top%2fReference%2fTimes%20Topics%2fPeople%2fC%2fChung%2c%20Connie>). In 1997, she became an ABC news investigator, and from 2002 to 2003, she was CNN's "biggest news star" (Romano par. 1). Besides winning Emmy Awards in 1978, 1980, and 1987, Chung received a teaching fellowship at Harvard and numerous journalism honours and awards ("Connie Chung," *Contemporary Authors Online*, 14 Jan. 2004. 20 July 2007, <http://galenet.galegroup.com.ezproxy.ae.talonline.ca/servlet/BioRC>).

Chung's image on television proffered the audience an attractive, well-dressed, feminine Asian American identity. In *A Language of Their Own*, staged in Los Angeles in 1994, Yew's use of Chung as a role model, who most notably created the standard Asian American broadcaster image in the 1990s, can be read as a strategy to question simplified images of an Asian American television figure, images that were amplified by the media and the conditions that generated these representations.[16] Ming's emulation of Chung's elocution is especially noteworthy not merely because of her linguistic talent, but rather the centrality of race to television's fashioning of an Asian American newscaster. Chung's star image on- and off-television set up a tension between a constructed televisual image of a co-anchor assisting Dan Rather, who called her "a nuclear reactor of energy," and a model minority Asian American, who was a "relentless and tenacious reporter" with "obvious good looks" to boot (*Newsmakers* par. 1, 3).[17]

Describing the process at considerable length, Ming proves how adept he is at picking up English:

> Everyone at school spoke English beautifully, and my English was

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[16] Describing the rise of Asian American female television reporters and news anchor, Somini Sengupta writes: "The very stereotypes that may have helped them land jobs are nevertheless damaging stereotypes that stem from images of geisha girls and war brides" (112).

[17] After Chung's debacle of the interview with Kathleen Gingrich and Oklahoma City blast coverage, in which she received severe criticism from television critics and local residents, Rather, who was feuding with Chung over news coverage, told TV reporters that Chung "did not seem well-informed." "In this business, you read or you die," Rather asserted (Reuven par. 25).

> always—well, unrefined, pidgin, tainted. The stuff Rex Harrison sang of in *My Fair Lady*. When I saw the movie, I felt I was Audrey Hepburn. More than anything else in the world, I wanted to be like her: delicate, refined, speaking perfectly, and wearing a Cecil Beaton original. Since no one at home spoke English fluently, I would spend countless hours watching TV every day. Repeating the same lines after Connie Chung and Mary Tyler Moore until I got the pronunciation, the rhythms, the expressions all down pat. My mother thought I was insane. But I finally did speak English just like everyone else, if not better. (131)

In this passage, Ming evokes Mary Tyler Moore and Connie Chung, figures who were "among the list of the 50 Greatest Women in Radio and Television compiled by American Women in Radio and Television (AWRT)" in 2001 ("Connie Chung, Mary Tyler Moore" par. 1). Ming's account of his laborious process of language assimilation, a process that also halts his "learning how to speak Chinese," suggests how important properly mastered English language remains, yet through Hepburn, Moore, and Chung it is also tied to learning what "good clothes" are (113). The language he is learning is not only standard English but the language of self-presentation in which dress is central. In this, the play broaches the question of dress as a signifier of linguistic competence, both literary and visually, to legitimate an American identity.

By looking beyond the stardom of Hepburn, Yew further underscores how dress as a linguistic signifier functions performatively to constitute gender and class identities. When Hepburn's Eliza Doolittle is transformed into a lady, she wears a white ball gown that signifies class and language competence. On the fashioning power of the white ball gown, Hepburn remarks: "In that absolutely sublime dress, with my hair dressed to kill, and diamonds everywhere, I felt super! All I had to do was walk down the staircase in Professor Higgins' house, but the dress made me do it. Clothes, like they say, make the man, but in my case, they also gave me the confidence I often needed" (Hellstern 43). Clothes, as Hepburn articulates it, are crucial in her acting and "look[ing] the part" (Hellstern 42). Hepburn's performative repetitions establish and sustain the illusion of a natural, stable gender identity fabricated by Beaton's fantasy of visual and sensual indulgence. Moreover, Hepburn's fashionable clothes are signifiers designed to mimic essentialized, related identity categories that are predicated upon exclusivity. Significantly, when Yew's play was staged in 1994, it resonated with an ambivalence marked by the mass wave of immigration in the 1990s and its ostensible precipitation of English-only legislation in several states. Ming spends time labouring to master standard English, trying to "cure" his linguistic pathology, his perceived inadequacies that thwart his assimilatory desires. While Beaton's lavish costumes continue to hold sway over Ming's fantasies, Yew's play shows that there remains an incommensurability between an imaginary image he invests in and the Asian American he is. Unlike the statute Pygmalion, Eliza is a real woman who perfects a literacy in the performative signs of class and gender identities. But the very theatricality of Eliza's dress demands that we rethink the teleological development of her transmutation from "ugly duckling" to the "glorious swan" (Harris 203). Beaton's costumes foreground the artifice and labour of English "literacy" and gender propriety. Moreover, just as Eliza Doolittle spends time training under Professor Henry Higgins for her English pronunciation, Hepburn took elocution lessons with Peter Ladefoged, a professor of phonetics at the University of Southern California (Harris 200).[18] In choosing Hepburn as a model of self-fashioning, does Ming actually transgress the materiality of race? Neither Hepburn the actress, nor Eliza the character, was a "natural." While Hepburn's "foreignness" became "one of her most endearing qualities," Yew shows that his Asian American characters do not enjoy such privilege (66). Racialization has turned race and language into class distinctions so that, in order to gain social acceptance and access to class mobility, Asian American characters strive to perfect their English, yet cannot "overcome" or transmute their perceived racial difference. While her audiences "forget" Hepburn/Eliza was never a "natural," Yew's Asian American characters cannot access a similar cultural amnesia. What are the implications of all of this for the new language spoken within the HIV community? From this argument of "naturalness" and the limits of self-fashioning, I turn now to how Yew's characters attempt to grasp the grief of death and loss from HIV-AIDS, its language, and loss as inscribed through both.

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[18] I look briefly at Hepburn's linguistic ability in order to further the implication of my discussion. Born in Brussels, Hepburn lived in England but moved to Holland when World War II broke out. After the War, Hepburn returned to England and became a fashion model and actress. In the early 1950s, London impresario Cecil Landeau funded Hepburn's elocution lessons with Felix Aylmer. As Harris notes, Hepburn's diction "wobbled between English, Dutch, and French, the three languages she had grown up with," and her English always had "a hint of foreignness," an attribute that suggested "a princess of mysterious nationality" (66).

When Oscar joins a group for people who are HIV positive, he learns that there is another language in which he must become competent in this community: "In the group, there was a new vocabulary, a new language, discussions on T-cells, AZT and PCP" (155). On top of an HIV language, there are several languages other than standard American English in the community. As Oscar says, "Thai, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Tagalog, pig Latin. And believe it or not, French" (144). Later on, Ming will re-emphasize the inner torment, sense of lack, and cultural anxiety provoked by language acquisition. Nowhere is the shift into "other" languages, that is HIV and ethnic languages, more evident than in the party scene set in Boston. Held in Oscar's apartment, the party, a gathering of the "old gang," is likened to "an evangelical convention" with about forty people "speaking wildly in tongues" (156). The allusion to "tongues," to other languages which are not Oscar's own in this community, serves to undercut the legitimization and naturalization of an official language and distinction, which contribute to, in Bourdieu's terms, "symbolic domination" in a system of class and linguistic distinctions (60). The key point here is that, as Benedict Anderson puts it, the nation is "an imagined political community" (6). Anderson's idea of "imagined community," where a shared national identity is a mediated one, is useful, particularly when it is connected to Raymond Williams' term, "structure of feeling," in theorizing how a national identity is not founded upon an ideal, homogenous community, whereby ethnic communities are linked together by the official national language. Instead, the play posits that communities of identity, feelings of belonging, are forged in imagined and local terms. In this respect, Anderson and Williams together offer a consideration of the way in which American national identity is an artificial construction. Yew foregrounds the incommensurable multiculturalism policy and the problematic of American national imagined identity in the play. Ostensibly a narrative of the pressures faced by Asian Americans in their efforts to redesign their identities through an investment in standard English, the play also points out that the Asian American characters' access to national identity is delimited by race. What is conveyed in Ming's and Oscar's family and community is a complex web of interrelations, whose linguistic excess fails to be contained by the definition of national identity. In particular, the play disrupts the fantasy of an ideal, national imagined community, a site of haunting where the sometimes contradictory or violent interrelations of Asian American characters point to different historical trajectories and subjectivities, such as English linguistic dominance and its colonial connection with the U.S.

At Oscar's party in Boston, Daniel and their friends carry on a "heated conversation" about government funding for AIDS research and "[r]acism within the gay community" (178, 179). Far from being a simplistic, uncritical celebration of multiculturalism and community, the play articulates the competing languages of class, ethnicity, nationality, and sexuality, all of which begin to manifest themselves at the micro-level of the party – "the" Asian American community. Through Ming, Oscar, and Robert, the play enacts the violence that underlies the constitution of American identity. Wong's gesture to the antagonism between "ABCs" (American-born Chinese) and "FOBs" (fresh-off-the-boat) is particularly relevant to the pressures and ambivalences of the Asian American linguistic situation (209). Operating within the binary markers of people who speak English and the Other who cannot speak proper English, Ming's complex identification with Pran leads him to transfer his linguistic anxieties and fears of estrangement to the Vietnamese American. Ming's description of Pran serves to highlight the violence that is built into the categorizing of immigrant identities by way of the ethnic-linguistic deficiency of the Other. Jealous of Robert's new partner, Ming calls Pran "that little Vietnamese boat person" and proceeds to displace his anger on Robert: "Maybe you like to finish his sentences too. Correct his English" (201, 213). Later on, Ming taunts Robert again by asking, "So what do you do with your evenings together? Practice English?—" (213). Here, refuting Ming's accusation of "white superiority," is how Robert puts the matter: "[Pran] talks to me, asshole! With the few fucking English words he knows! In his broken English unbearable to your ears! He fucking talks to me! Not like you! I hate you!" (214). Ming's taking out his frustration on Robert crystallizes the alienating, brutalizing effects that can be a corollary of acquiring the ideals of citizenship. Ming's self-revulsion and descent into elliptical language underlines a sense of ambivalence and brutality to the fantasy of improving and acquiring the superior taste and the haute signifiers of the fair lady in *Pygmalion*.

As is evident in Ming's displacement of ethnicist violence to Pran in the heat of the moment, race still matters, and the possibility of becoming a pledged citizen in the U.S. does not come easily to every Asian immigrant. A crucial question the play asks is, what forms of racial violence accompany the structuring of American national identity, and how might a new national imaginary be created? In "The Color of Theater," Roberta Uno provides a useful means of entry into the interventionist work that the play stages. Unpacking the term multicultural, Uno argues: "it might be assumed that our theatre work should only show a particular community at its best possible light. This expectation came from audience members of color entering a space where they were self-conscious of the double gaze of the white audience member; of 'them' watching images on stage and shifting that gaze to extrapolate meaning to those seated nearby. We received pressure to sanitize the work, to not expose our 'dirty linen;' in fact, to censor it" (9). Uno's metaphor "dirty linen" has a much broader currency: through dress signs, Yew's play throws into relief the aggression and violence of language competence and social exclusion, but also asks us to reconsider inclusive ways of imagining intercultural and national communities.

Ming's drawn-out silence in Act Two and his later fights with Robert function as a recurrent readmission of the violence that structures the English language, through a larger social violence that discursively produces and creates the nation and, in that violence produces the ideal citizen. What is the significance of Ming's laconic, often monosyllabic, response to Robert and Oscar in Act Two? In "Bodies from Abroad," Alan Kraut points out that medical experts speak of the post-traumatic stress disorder suffered by Asian Americans as a "form of cultural bereavement related to the loss of homeland, culture, tradition, and national identity" (127). Anne Anlin Cheng' discussion of the connection between cultural health and assimilation is instructive at this juncture. Cheng argues, "American idealization of health, cure, and mourning (i.e., 'getting over' something, or 'moving on') is itself symptomatic of the culture's coercive normality" (95). "When it comes to racial mourning about and for the self," Cheng writes, "melancholia (the hanging-on to a self synecdochized as a 'pestilential arm') provides the form of grievance necessary for grieving" (100). David L. Eng's and Shinhee Han's essay on racial melancholia as a structure of everyday living also provides a helpful approach to press on the discussion of Ming's "cultural bereavement": mourning for the loss of Oscar to AIDS, the loss of Chinese language, the loss of communal bond, and the loss of history. In particular, Eng's and Han's theorization of racial melancholia evinces the pull of everyday affective social and material experience and consciousness that are subjective and often invisible. Using case histories of Asian American students seeking therapy for depression in 1998, Eng and Han address the ways in which Asian Americans are haunted by their inability to "get over" the lost "ideals of whiteness" and Asianness (345). Eng and Han describe how Asian Americans are often considered "perpetual foreigners," and sometimes "hypermodel minorities—inhumanly productive—and hence pathological to the nation" (345). Assimilation into the nation, Eng and Han elucidate, "demands a psychic splitting on the part of the Asian American subject, who knows and does not know, at once, that she or he is part of the larger group" (348). Both Oscar's and Ming's mimicry of English language can be read in what Eng and Han regard as the "negotiation between mourning *and* melancholia in the immigration and assimilation process" (357). Ming not only mourns the loss of Oscar, but also mourns queer and Asian American communities and the figuration of AIDS in the heteronormative imaginary. Eng and Han posit that "mourning *and* melancholia coexist at once in the process of assimilation," and that melancholia is an "integral part of daily existence and survival" (363).

Within the play, mourning and loss are signified through clothing, such as Ming's "brown coat" which bears witness to the end of a relationship when the sickly Oscar tells Ming that they should split up (151). In this scene, Yew uses the coat to signify how Ming is at the juncture of change:

> Ming: Then one night when I came home, you said—
>
> Oscar: "I don't think we should see each other anymore.
>
> Ming: "I didn't know what to say. I stood there as if someone had slapped me in the face…. I laid my brown coat and leather briefcase down on the wood floor (151).

Ming's removal of his coat signifies not only the end of the relationship, but also his becoming more and more withdrawn and vulnerable. Dress and self-presentation matter to Ming, and he spends time "coordinating [his] clothes" for the party hosted by Oscar (156). Here is a salient moment from the party in a Boston apartment, where Ming meets Oscar for the first time after their break-up and notices Oscar's clothing straightaway: "He's wearing that shirt I got him when we were on the Cape last year. I wonder if it's deliberate. Trying to guilt me or something" (157). Throughout the play both Oscar and Ming wear their politics and hearts on their sleeves.

What relevance does dress have in affective loss and mourning? In Yew's play, dress becomes a site of mourning and melancholia, as seen in Daniel's keeping Oscar's gray scarf as a memory and marker of affective intensities.

> Daniel: I'm going to keep a few things. A few things that remind me of us.
>
> Oscar: The gray scarf you bought me last fall.
>
> Daniel: It still smells of you. (226)

Karen Sánchez-Eppler's discussion of the strategic uses of nineteenth-century sentimental narrative's power to draw reader's tears as a way of emancipating "the bodies of slaves" is helpful for reading the gray scarf as a signifier of Oscar's impending death from AIDS, affective loss, mourning, and melancholia (26). "Reading sentimental fiction," Sánchez-Eppler writes, "is thus a bodily act, and the success of a story is gauged, in part, by its ability to translate words into heartbeats and sobs" (26). The character's tears "dissolve racial barriers" and move readers to change their perception of the human body (26). I want to extend what Sánchez-Eppler describes as the "palpability of the character's emotional experience" to the play's use of clothes or an article of clothing to transmit the complexity of affective relationships between gay men (27). In using the sartorial sign of the scarf as a marker of sentiment, the play challenges the politics of homophobia and pathologizing of homosexuality, particularly given the early association of AIDS epidemic and perceived gay promiscuity in the 1980s. In her discussion of transnational trauma, Ann Cvetkovich posits that the emphasis on feelings of loss needs to be "on collective rather than individual trauma and on the long-term effects of trauma across the generations, effects that include a range of affective experiences" (119). Drawing on Eng's and Han's theory of melancholia, Cvetkovich argues that "life stories, oral histories, histories of community, literature are crucial media that connect subjects to social relations" (124). Daniel's and Ming's mourning for Oscar also represents a collective affective mourning that well illustrates Cvetkovich's description of the "structures of feeling" that work as the "foundation for public cultures" (11). Cvetkovich writes: "It is important to incorporate affective life into our conceptions of citizenship and to recognize that these affective forms of citizenship may fall outside the institutional practices that we customarily associate with the concept of a citizen" (11). Although Cvetkovich's discussion focuses on everyday affective experiences of lesbians, her theorization of collective feelings of loss applies as well to the communal mourning of loss in Yew's play. I see Yew deliberately returning to and invoking in its particular political manifestations centred on oppression, servitude, liberty, and affect, in nineteenth-century American literature in order to not only mark the collective affective trauma Cvetkovich locates in citizenship, but also to mobilize affect and its earlier political uses for a contemporary reapprehension of HIV-AIDS and the body that endures its effects. The affect of Oscar's scarf carries both melancholia and a call for political change, a call for a different reading of bodies than the pathologizing discourses of HIV-AIDS and of the "immigrant" allow in the mid-to-late 1990s.

It is certainly no accident that in recent years Yew has shifted from his initial preoccupation with "discovering one's self from within" to delving into how "Asian people" interact within and outside their communities (Smith 8). Inasmuch as Yew has seen changes in "Gay Theatre," he is keen to move beyond caricaturing and stereotyping the Asian community toward exploring and humanizing narratives about people living in small towns, people with HIV begging and trying to survive on the streets, and people struggling to gain acceptance within their community. In that spirit, I want to shift Oscar's illness onto a wider ground that involves tracking the history of bodies and the mechanics of surveillance. For, in the history of stereotypes about Asian immigrants, a conjunction persists which combines hygiene with race, gender, sexuality, and morality. What is the role of public health in configuring racial categories and the demography of risk? After Oscar reveals his sickness, Ming's remark, "We avoided each other like the plague" is met by Oscar's remark: "That was a poor choice of words" (141). Importantly, Oscar's disapproval of Ming's diction functions to apprehend historical contingencies in relation to the larger narrative of Asian American history in which the racially coded language of disease and public health reverberates through the 1990s. In "The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century," Foucault elucidates how doctors were endowed with a "surplus of power" in "observing, correcting and improving the social 'body' and maintaining it in a permanent state of health" (177). "A 'medico-administrative' knowledge," as Foucault puts it, "constituted a politico-medical hold on a population hedged in by a whole series of prescriptions relating not only to disease but to general forms of existence and behaviour (food and drink, sexuality and fecundity, clothing and the layout of living space). Drawing from Foucault's discussion of hygiene and medical surveillance, I extend it to press further on the historical framing of the plague reference in Yew's play.

Characterized as an "Oriental disease" by Surgeon General Walter Wyman in the 1900 epidemic, bubonic plague was called "Oriental plague" during the 1907 outbreak in San Francisco (Shah 155). Between 1871 and 1883, U.S. public health authorities incarcerated seventy-nine Chinese lepers in Smallpox Hospital, and, in the face of public hysteria and a congressional committee inquiry into Chinese immigration in 1876, the San Francisco Board of Health approved the policy of deportation (99). Specifically, Oscar's objection aptly recalls how public health authorities and social critics identified Chinese as carriers of diseases and pollutants and Chinese immigrants as "health menaces" by 1882, and branded the Chinese community of San Francisco Chinatown as a "plague spot" in 1900 (Kraut 84, 86). Overwhelmingly supported by the U.S. Congress, the Exclusion law not only restricted the entry of Chinese immigrants, it also invoked the 1790 Naturalization Act to forbid them from becoming naturalized citizens on grounds that they were not white (Kraut 83). Anti-Chinese legislation had ramifications for working-class Chinese labourers who returned to China for short visits, for the 1888 Scott Act barred them from re-entering the U.S. Shortly thereafter, the 1892 Geary Act extended the exclusion of Chinese labourers, and by 1904, the exclusion policy was extended indefinitely. Crucial to the Chinese Exclusion Act is that it set the blueprint for modern American immigration policies: Through the 1907 Gentleman's Agreement, restrictions were imposed on Japanese; the Immigration Act of 1917 created the "barred zone" for people from Southeast Asia; and the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 introduced the national origins quota system (Barde and Bobonis 111). Nineteenth-century stereotypes of Chinese as contagious other, as excess, contaminating the body politic continue to resurface in different forms and shape the nation's racial imaginary surrounding anxiety over the threat of the other through intimate physical contact.

Given the historical stereotyping of Chinese settlers as pollutant carriers, an embodiment that encompasses race, class, health, sexuality, and citizenship, the play underscores the critical consequences that come with the signifying term "plague." Borrowing Mary Douglas' theory of danger lying in states of transit, I enlarge the signification of "plague" to include not only an illness, but also part of a "system" to maintain order by "exaggerating the difference between within and without" (5). The recurrent theme of illness and contagion, then, set in motion the provisions of laws and health and zoning regulations. Racial and hygiene discourses underlying the exclusion act continue to inform contemporary national and legislative regulations, such as illegal immigration policies, green cards, and passports, as well as the racial makeup of the nation. There is much more to *A Language of Their Own* than simply articulating a personal story. Rather it shows that the boundary between private and public is illusory and that the definition of citizenship and fitness impinges on the characters' intimate lives and identity formation through language and dress. In a sense, Yew's play renders problematic what Rosina Lippi-Green calls a "standard language ideology, which proposes that an idealized nation-state has one perfect, homogeneous language" (64). By foregrounding heterogeneous voices, vernacular English, HIV language, and immigrant languages, the play makes visible the linguistic disciplining discourses that sustain and make coherent hierarchies of race, gender, sexuality, and national origin (64). Dress signification is an effective tool to recapture and narrate memories and realities of hygiene practice. Drawing from accounts of the 1900 bubonic plague epidemic in San Francisco's Chinatown, I suggest that the play interrogates the vested interests of medicalized racial discourses. Nowhere is this more evident than in Oscar's gray scarf, which functions as a sign of mourning and of challenge to a health authority that attempts to contain the sufferings and deaths arising from HIV-AIDS.

Under these circumstances of mourning, the play stages what Foucault posits as "genealogy," which Yew further develops in *A Beautiful Country*. Foucault's concept of genealogy as scouring for events goes as follows: "genealogy must seek [events] in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history—in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts; it must be sensitive to their recurrence, not in order to trace the gradual curve of their evolution, but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles" ("Nietzsche" 139 – 140). *A Beautiful Country* pursues further the role of storytelling, addressing the themes of fitness and citizenship raised in *A Language* *of Their Own*, but it does so on a multimedia scale, narrating Asian American histories and stories through the immigrant host Miss Visa, who is swathed in drag and unswathed at the end of the play.

(Ad)dressing A History of Immigration and Citizenship in *A Beautiful Country*

First performed in 1998, Yew's *A Beautiful Country* stages 150 years of Asian American history, just as the Levi Strauss & Co. celebrated 125 years of its 501 jeans' originality in the same year ("History of the Levi's 501").[19] In scene "S" of the play, the immigrant drag queen from Malaysia, Miss Visa walks on the street, having donned a pair of Levi 501s, when he sees an angry homeless Vietnam veteran wearing "army fatigues," who identifies Visa as a "Vietcong / Vietminh" (251, 252). Amidst the veteran's racially-inflected tirade, Visa is grasping at straws: "Embarrassed / Frantic / I dig deep into my 501s / Find round silver denominations of / twenty-five / ten / five / Shower him with change / to buy his silence / The coins / they trickle onto his dusty palms" (254). The veteran, however, throws the coins back at Visa and "walks away" with his "head held high" (254). It is worth recalling that Levis Strauss & Co. launched an ad campaign that presented "Levi's jeans as a link between Americans of all ages, races, and lifestyles" in 1997 (Alice Z. Cuneo, "Levi's Unleashing," par. 2). *A Beautiful Country* also prefigures Levi Strauss & Co.'s 2000 online ad campaign, called "Lost But Not Lost," which created several "Journey in Jeans" websites that threaded stories of three fictional American characters, named "urban nomads," as they travel through Morocco (Cuneo, "Latest Web Strategy," par. 1).[20] Although Levi's ad campaigns stage a celebration of American "diversity," Yew marks the way in which they elide a lived experience of racialized difference that cannot be overcome simply by wearing a pair of jeans that ostensibly invokes a "happy" narrative of cultural pluralism. Not only does Yew's play dramatize the larger history of Asian American immigration, it underscores how U.S. military involvement in the Vietnam War and its aftermath spill out into the everyday living space. Yet as much as Levi's 501s jeans signify Americanness and a progressivist tradition, Yew's play invokes Levi's 501 twice to interrogate specific historical moments—the play's staging of Asian American immigration and the Chinese Exclusion Acts; and race and hygiene discourse—so that Visa's 501s take on specific significations that can be productively read as addressing the discourse of citizenship and national belonging. In this scene, the play uses Levi's 501 jeans to address a larger narrative of Asian American immigration history that is registered in contemporary debates. In other words, I use Visa's 501s and his encounter with the Vietnam veteran as the starting point for a discussion of how dress in this scene not only thematizes the haunting of U.S. military history in Southeast Asia, but also troubles any simplistic imagining of American identity and national belonging. I read the encounter between the

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[19] Considered an "authentic part of American history," an old pair of Levi's becomes part of the collection at the Smithsonian Institution in 1964 (James Sullivan 145). In the 1980s, Levi's was a "generic term for blue jeans" (218).

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[20] One of the analysts who reviewed the 2000 Levi's ad campaign said that it had "a very European sensibility" (Jane L. Levere C8). I suggest that this sense of "European sensibility" open up a range of questions about racial preference and American national ideal.

Levi's 501-clad Visa and the Vietnam veteran as a scene of misrecognition in which any "Asian" becomes transportable in a racial imaginary, interchangeable. Yew's play situates this problematic in a historical moment that was characterized by new immigration legislation and changing demographics.

Following the passing of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, a bill to Congress in 1998 proposed to deny birthright citizenship to children of undocumented immigrants. Neil Gotanda, commenting on the 1996 immigrant bill, argues that "the 'other' is not limited to foreign 'aliens' but includes 'Other non-Whites' who are very much a part of American society" (258). "Even as we approach the turn of the century," Gotanda continues, "'We the People' remain at risk, still under challenge, still undergoing change" (258). In this light, *A Beautiful Country* is not so much a celebration of the diversity of Asian American community but a critical dramatization of immigration and citizenship.[21] Not surprisingly, Yew mounted the production in Cornerstone, where the theatre takes seriously a responsibility to its local community, and where the play was presented as one in a series of community collaboration projects set in urban neighbourhoods.[22] For Yew, the earliest plays examine diaspora, sexuality, and the emotional journey of the characters, and his later plays have evolved to include intercultural collaboration to create multi-layered, multi-vocal narratives that inform and intersect with Asian American experience and lives.

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[21] Erika Lee, discussing nativism and anxiety about post-1965 demographic changes, states that the enforcement of gatekeeping measures became a major preoccupation of the twentieth and early twenty-first century. As Lee notes, undocumented arrival of Irish immigrants in the 1980s, illegal smuggling of Chinese by boats that recalls the illegal immigrant during the exclusion era, and Mexicans crossing the U.S.-Mexican border have reactivated experiences and regulations of the Chinese exclusion laws and rendered them a "mainstream phenomenon" (*America's Gates* 248, 249, 250).

[22] According to Jan Cohen-Cruz, the decline of the national protest movements in the 1960s underpinned the emergence and development of the contemporary

Founded in 1986, Cornerstone Theatre, a multiethnic, multilingual theatre company, created collaborative musical productions in rural communities across the country, a process that combined locally-situated textual adaptation and performance to foster community identity. As Sonja Kuftinec puts it: "Co-founders Alison Carey and Bill Rauch were frustrated by what they felt to be a limited idea of national identity as defined by the audience of the American Repertory Theatre. Carey and Rauch felt that, despite its titular claims, this theatre's mainly white, upper-middle-class audience did not represent the full diversity of America" (92). In 1986, Cornerstone members arrived in Marmarth and met with community actors, local residents, and church members at a local bar in order to work on *The Marmarth Hamlet*, an adaptation of *Hamlet* (92 – 94). Between 1986 and 1991, Cornerstone Theatre travelled to rural communities in ten states and staged twelve musical productions. In 1992, Cornerstone Theatre settled in Los Angeles, creating community-based productions in urban neighbourhoods and collaborating with art organizations. *A Beautiful Country* reflects the seminal strands of Cornerstone theatre: the participation of the

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political, oppositional community arts movement in the mid-1970s. "In the late 1970s," Cohen-Cruz explains, "with a heightened consciousness to think globally but act locally, activist art practitioners looked to local contexts in which their work could play a role" ("Introduction to Community Art and Activism").

community in using devising as a strategy for storytelling to enable social, political, and personal change. Reflecting Yew's evolving visual language and theatrical form, as well as his recognition of developments in media technology in the late 1990s, *A Beautiful Country*'s devised visual performance is relevant to its narrating genealogies of the past and present.

Integral to the Cornerstone Theatre Company is its mission statement to provide community-based productions: "By making theatre with and for people of many ages, cultures and levels of theatrical experience, Cornerstone builds bridges between and within diverse communities in our home city of Los Angeles and nationwide." Cornerstone Theatre performed in community venues such as schools, low-income housing projects for seniors, and malls on a "pay-what-you can admission basis" (Cornerstone Theatre Company official Web site). It might be worth pointing out that this mandate has strong echoes of black aesthetic, or black arts movement principles that were rooted in black civil rights and black nationalist politics, politics that were in turn central to Asian American political development in the 1970s and a link between Asian American politics in 1970s and black nationalism. After gathering interviews, meeting with local groups and leaders, and assembling research materials, Cornerstone playwrights proceed to "hammer out" scripts for workshopping among artists and community participants (Cohen-Cruz 163). Likewise, in addition to researching archives of record and historical writing of heritage and tradition, Yew's practice was to interview and gather personal narratives from the Los Angeles Asian community. In this, *A Beautiful Country*'s theatrical narrativization of immigrant history resonates with

Cornerstone's motto of "telling our nation's stories." I read Yew's play as an active rememory of immigrant acts and immigration history that counters essentialist, normative assumptions of nation, national identity, and the Asian American subject. While Yew depicts the ways in which characters living in the diaspora are constituted and constrained by political and social forces, his narrative is a representation of Asian American subjectivity and identity for which he affirms a sense of dignity and strength. In the play, characters tell their own stories, bringing into place their own feelings in their own language and their own voices. Stuart Hall offers a productive way to consider this approach of speaking from "knowable places": "One cannot discover or try to discuss, the black movements, civil rights movements, the movements of black cultural politics in the modern world, without that notion of the discovery of where people came from, the return to some kind of roots, the speaking of a past that previously had no language" (184). In this spirit, I provide a theoretical understanding of the enunciation of heterogeneous Asian American identities from specific moments in history through the lens of dress as a narrative device in Yew's play. Although Yew's production marshals various media, media that include dress, interviews, testimonies, music, newspaper clippings, and official documents, it refuses to follow the conventions and expectations of a linear docudrama. Instead, it is a multi-media theatrical performance encompassing and juxtaposing multiple narratives. Each narrative represents a site of resistance, a place from which to speak across racial and national boundaries.

Staged in Broadway and Hill (Chinatown), *A Beautiful Country* was a production in "The BH Cycle, 1997 – 1999." The performance venue, Chinatown's Castelar Elementary School, is pertinent to my discussion. According to Lisa Lowe, the "state apparatuses—schooling, communications media, the legal system—that assimilate immigrant individuals into citizenship are integral to the constitution of a state in which their racial and ethnic differences are silenced" (44). The school is a site of internalized discipline, of securing national amnesia through nation state-approved curriculum, of ambivalence, whereby students feel a sense of belonging and not belonging. In this sense, *A Beautiful Country* is what Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks call "site-specific work," in which the performance space of the school functions as a "locale of cultural intervention" (111). As a devised performance, the play constitutes a "theatre archaeology," which Pearson and Shanks define as a "contemporary material practice which works on and with the traces of the past and within which the archaeologist is implicated as an active agent of interpretation" (11). How might identities be created, challenged, and reimagined in the performance held at the archaeological site of a school? Yew deploys the figure of Miss Visa, an immigrant drag queen and hairdresser from Penang, Malaysia, to host the unfolding of Asian American narratives and immigration history. Consider the play's Gwendoline Yeo, a Chinese Singaporean immigrant. She remembers vividly the first day of her arrival in California: "I was at a store / buying my school uniform. / I was trying on these little plaid / skirts / for

Catholic school" (175). Yeo goes on to elaborate her ambivalent experience in school:

> When I was in high school,
> things didn't get much easier.
> Race became more and more of an issue.
> My American friends were like,
> "Why are you hanging with
> those Asian gangsters?"
> And my Asian friends where like,
> "Why do you hang out with
> those blondies?"
> I used to go to school
> two minutes before the bell rang
> so I wouldn't have
> to choose. (176)

As such, the school is filled with stories and memories, and simultaneously, haunted by ghosts and spirits of the past. But Yeo is a model-minority success story: she becomes literate in the signs of race, class, and gender and acquires a new language of self through her beauty queen titles. Being "schooled" in the national subject ideal, Yeo joins the Miss Teen Chinatown San Francisco Pageant, and later, wins the crown of "Miss Chinatown USA 1998" (177, 178). Meanwhile, Yeo's father becomes a full professor and a doctor, her mother "gets more and more beautiful" and becomes an RDA (Registered Dental Assistant), her sister gets into medical school, and her brother receives a Ph.D. in "molecular genetics" (178). Following this, the next scene uses slides to narrate the 1871 Los Angeles' Chinatown massacre.

While the play would not deny the success stories of Asian Americans like Gwendoline Yeo and her family, it undercuts the story of progress to restage stories of past events as a way to illuminate and extend the audience's understanding of the present. Besides testimonies of men and women, the play includes intertexts such as: an excerpt of Henry Grimm's play *The Chinese Must Go* (1879), narratives of the Filipino migrant workers' experiences in Alaska, Seattle, and Los Angeles in the 1930s, the testimony of Mexican American José Casas,[23] the World War II internment of 9,400 Japanese Americans in Manzanar, a parody of *Time*'s 1941 article "How to Tell Your Friends from the Japs" using a Japanese model and a Chinese model on a fashion runway, the internment of Mexican American Ralph Lazo[24] during World War II, the election of Asian Americans to the U.S. senate, testimonies of Vietnamese and Hmong Americans, men in drag performing an Isodora Duncanesque dance of the Negro Alley

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[23] José Casas' "Chinese *abuelito,*" whose name was Marty Le Wong, was Mexicano and Chinese (212). The play uses the figure of Casas to gesture to his complicated identities and the history of Asian migration to Mexico.

[24] Ralph Lazo (1924 – 1992) was a sixteen-year-old American high school student of Mexican and Irish descent who joined his Japanese American friends voluntarily at the Manzanar concentration camp during World War II (Janice Harumi Yen, "Who was Ralph Lazo?" *Nikkei for Civil Rights & Redress*, 27 July 2007 < http://www.ncrr-la.org/news/7_6_03/2.html>).

Massacre,[25] and a restaging of the murder of Vincent Chin in 1982.[26] While stories and statistics of these events are available in public records and written documents, Yew's staging of these Asian American stories takes on a ghostly significance, reminding the audience of U.S. power and military involvement in Southeast Asia, as well as corresponding tensions and anti-Asian sentiment in the U.S. in the 1980s. Rather than examining all of these stories and testimonies, I will explore how the play uses the narrative device of dress as a springboard to retrace and remember immigration policies and different categories of Asian American experience. Therefore, I will focus on significant moments in the play in order to theorize how it intervenes in and prompts a rethinking of the ways in which race functions as an organizing element in the containment of danger and pollutants, as well as its implication in the construction of identities and national community.

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[25] The Negro Alley Massacre, or the Chinese Massacre of Los Angeles, occurred in L.A.'s Chinatown in 1871. An accidental shooting and killing of a white man, who was caught in the crossfire between two Chinese men, provided the spark for the riots, in which over five hundred men mobbed Chinatown, looted shops, and killed nineteen Chinese men mainly by lynching ("A History of Chinese Americans in California: The 1870s." 12 Sept. 2007 <http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/5views/5views3d.htm>

[26] In the early nineteenth century, the Hmong migrated from China to Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam. Hmong Americans all originally emigrated from Laos because of the American role in the Vietnam War (1945 – 1975), which also involved Cambodia and Laos. Beginning in 1959, Hmong men were recruited by CIA agents and trained by the Green Berets to be mercenary soldiers in the U.S.'s "secret war" in Laos (Yang 165). Since the end of the Indochina War in 1975, more than 1 million refugees and immigrants from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam resettled in America, and 750,000 in Canada, Australia, and France (Rumbaut 175, 179). In 1989, the Hmong American population was estimated to be 100,000, and in 1999, the foreign-born and American-born Hmong American population combined was estimated to be 200,000 (Yang 166). Vincent Chin, a Chinese American, was killed by two unemployed Detroit auto plant workers with baseball bats. These laid-off workers mistook Chin for a Japanese, who they regarded as taking away their jobs at a time when anti-Asian sentiment was rife in the 1980's auto-industry due to the rise of Japanese auto-makers in the industry.

If the nation is an "imagined community" whereby citizens believe that their identity and sense of belonging are bound up with others who speak the same language or reside within the borders of the nation-state, *A Beautiful Country* raises the question as to what the nation is and who the people are.[27] Who has been excluded from or included in the community? Yew tells the story of this community differently, against the grain of grand narratives of belonging and loyalty to the community by tracking ideologies of race and language which found the nation at different moments. Inserting narratives from culturally invisible Asian Americans into the production, the play is always informed by a consciousness of the present, a space made available for both problematization of the past and transformation of the present. As part of its interrogation of the progress of American democracy, the opening and closing scenes of the play focus on the immigration station, a site of transit par excellence. While the customs and immigrations setting is also interspersed in the play, the opening and closing scenes are sartorially charged *mise en scène* that provide a structure with which to remember the body of Asian American history.

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[27] While grounding the idea of community as a "function of commonality," Sonja Kuftinec cautions against any notion of an ideal community, which also "implies boundaries, difference, and exclusion" (92). In his survey of grassroots or community-based theatre, Bruce McConachie argues that as "face-to-face interactions dwindle in significance in people's everyday lives, the imaginative construction of 'community' assumes greater importance" in the late twentieth century (37). In an important respect, Yew's production broached what McConachie posits as the "potentiality of commonality of citizenship" and extended the questioning of the discourse of community in keeping with discussions about community-based theatre during this period.

When Miss Visa speaks with other characters, she is actively engaging in authoring narratives of subjectivity, as well as re-accenting the stories of emotional pasts with Malay and vernacular Chinese speech. Thinking along the lines of language and construction of identities, I situate the play in the larger historical, socio-economic, institutional, and political contexts of multicultural U.S. Miss Visa is at the helm taking up what Yew characterizes as a position of "in-between-ness," a position of surplus that bespeaks identifications with multiple cultures and languages across diasporic and imagined boundaries. Her cross-dressing is a site of semiotic motion in gender and linguistic identity reconstruction, a transgressive, mobile self-fashioning against hegemonic discourses of inclusion and exclusion. As a language, Marjorie Garber writes, transvestism is "both a personal and a political, as well as an aesthetic and theatrical, mode of self-construction" (236). Garber argues that transvestism disrupts received notions of gender and sexual identities (354). Importantly, I would add, Visa's cross-dressing alludes to the people, languages, nationalities, sites of transit, geographical crossing, and stories that connect America to other nations. I want to flesh out the metaphorical and sartorial narratives of border crossing as recited by Visa and Chinaman, an immigrant from Toisan in China who was quarantined on Angel Island. By intercutting Visa's narrative with immigrant acts and testimonials of diverse characters to create several narratives, the text evokes parallels between past and present events, while raising questions about the resilience and effects of categories of identity.

Despite the exclusion acts, Chinese immigrants were determined to strategize and circumvent the immigration laws to gain admission into the U.S., such as becoming well-versed in the admission and re-entry standards and regulations by which immigration officials evaluated and processed their applications.[28] As a result, during the exclusion era (1882 – 1943), about 300,955 Chinese entered or returned, a number that exceeds those who came between 1849 and 1882 prior to the exclusion laws ("Defying Exclusion 1).[29] Citing a photograph circa 1916, Lee illustrates how Chinese immigrants understood that class privilege and wealth were crucial to their admission at the Angel Island immigration station: "In an effort to impress immigration officials, Chinese often wore their best clothes during their interviews. Western-style suits in particular were considered signs of economic success and acculturation and were interpreted favourably by immigration officials" (134).[30] Chinese immigrants traveling as first-class passengers were exempted from medical inspection and reviewed favourably by immigration officials.

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[28] Court cases found in the archives indicate that Chinese were not passive victims of restrictive immigration legislation. With the help of attorneys, they pleaded their cases to the American courts (Daniels par. 11).

[29] The1882 Exclusion Act imposed a ban on the Chinese immigrant labouring class, but it gave "differential treatment" to Chinese diplomat personnel, merchants, students, and legitimate travelers, based on their "perceived socio-economic status and the immigration laws," and continued to grant them admission into the U.S. (Barde and Bobonis 130).

[30] While Chinese protested against the screening process dispensed by immigration officials, they had "accepted" that the policy of exclusion had been "made permanent" in Theodore Roosevelt's administration (Daniels par. 4). By the time the Angel Island immigration service facility officially opened in 1910, Chinese response to and challenge of the policy of exclusion were based on class and citizenship, leading to rifts in the community. According to Lee, "Chinese merchants and Chinese American citizens also sought to distance themselves from returning labourers and other Chinese attempting to enter the country illegally" (129). Implicated in the politics of class in the struggle to claim citizenship and

Having noted the way in which Chinese immigrants invested in their sartorial appearance to get around the exclusion laws, I want to explore another form of embodiment in *A Beautiful Country* by rethinking the way Miss Visa does gender and class through dress in a context which undermines the conventions of ideal citizenship. Clothing and appearance, as Erika Lee says, serve as the racialized lens through which immigration officials at Angel Island gauged the class status of Chinese immigrants. Lee points out that in 1912, a Chinese immigrant entering as a merchant, a marker of wealth and literacy, was refused entry on the grounds of his "exceedingly poor" appearance, which was confirmed by "his 'poor quality' clothes," when an official searched his trunk (89). If working-class Chinese immigrants performed class and respectability by dressing in standard, stylish clothing to "pass" the review process at the Angel Island station, in contrast the play offers Visa, a hairdresser and a drag queen, signifying what Marjorie Garber would call the "category crisis of the immigrant" in the 1990s (79). Disrupting the fixity of gender boundaries, the figure of Visa raises questions about the policing of borders. In a manner reminiscent of Chinese immigrants' interrogation and physical examination by immigration authorities at

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national belonging, the Chinese American community's demonstration of its fitness and respectability to be incorporated into America, as distinct from Chinese labourers as well as Chinese bachelors, thus legitimated the distinction between "us" and "them" within the community itself. In light of this, Yew raises questions and shatters assumptions about the notion of a "community" by showing the contradictions the term contains, what it neglects to address or excludes from the history of Asian American community.

the Angel Island immigration station during the enforcement of exclusion, Yew shows that the immigration officer and security guards play a crucial role in processing and evaluating immigrants. *A Beautiful Country* illustrates institutional apparatuses that speak to the way in which immigrant identities informing the interrogation procedures are bound to U.S. exclusion policies. Situating a scene at the immigration reception station, the play draws parallels between Visa's and Chinaman's interrogation by federal immigration officials: Visa sees the "Formica white / the counters of immigration," and Chinaman comes upon white faces (196). Standing next to Chinaman, Visa describes the encounter with the technologies of immigration assessment as a "verbal barrage" that is akin to a lesson in geography and history, which is followed by: "A grilling / An interrogation / A torrent of words questions answers / A flutter of visa papers / landing cards / A studied glance / from the immigration officer / A sudden reprieve / A sapphire blue / His eyes / This officer / A look of an angel / A welcome mat to the country beautiful" (197). What may need emphasis, nevertheless, is the role which the Angel Island immigration station, a technology of national control and security since the Chinese Exclusion Act, has served in externalizing the threat of difference to the domestic space, legitimating the Chinese immigrant's exclusion from the nation, and displacing the historical specificity of particular anxieties on to a generalized racial "otherness."

Whether traveling by air or boat, both Visa and Chinaman cross national borders in search of a better life:

> Chinaman: I capture the infinite possibilities

of the new world
Visa: Of *mei guo*
Chinaman: Of beautiful country
Visa: Of this place called America (193 – 194).

By re-citing "America" in different ways, Chinaman and Visa invoke a host of economic, legal, and social privileges and rights that are embedded in that term. Whereas Chinaman views the beautiful country as representing the "pursuit of liberty, happiness, opportunity," Visa sees a "country bathed in a Hollywood halo" (195). As Visa puts it: "I have long lived in America / in its pages / glossy pages of / VOGUE / PEOPLE / COSMOPOLITAN"(195). In addition, Visa "lived" the "lives" of television sitcoms, such as *Friends*, *Happy Days*, and *Home Improvement*, which show "the promises of a new life / in the new world" (196). Not only does the play throw into question the fidelity of translating "America" (□ □) as a beautiful country, whereby full citizenship and privileges are available to its inhabitants, it also foregrounds that the translated text of "America," that is the nation-state, itself obscures the historical connection between immigration policies and race, class, language, and nation. If dress serves as a signifier of class and citizenship suitability at the beginning of the twentieth century, Miss Visa, "who is dressed like Madonna," does not conform to dominant expectations and standard conventions of respectable gender identity (171). Drawing from what Gee identifies as the "gendered nature" of assessing Asian immigrants as part of Americanization efforts to "reform immigrants and peoples of colour" at the Angel Island immigration station, I suggest that *A Beautiful Country* reenacts, as well as clarifies, the centrality of immigrant identities inherent in the immigration officer's interrogation of Miss Visa (101, 102).[31]

Nicknamed "Ellis Island of the West," the Angel Island quarantine functioned as a site of observation and surveillance akin to Bentham's Panopticon, a carceral which Foucault uses to describe the linkage between the production of medical knowledge and discipline and punishment.[32] Between 1870 and 1920, San Francisco health authorities were determined to address public health crises and the spread of infectious diseases by imposing quarantine, vaccinations, and cleansing and fumigation measures. At the Angel Island station, immigration authorities examined immigrants for sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis, and mental and physical defects. In addition, Asian immigrants were scrutinized for parasitic diseases that were identified as widespread in Asia (Markel and Stern 1321 – 1322). Public anxiety about the San Francisco plague epidemic spreading to the east in 1900, for example, led to a "health crusade" in which the U.S. Marine Hospital Service cordoned off San Francisco Chinatown, ordered mandatory "mass inoculations" with the experimental Haffkine prophylactic vaccine and disinfection of every Chinese and Japanese home, and barred any Chinese and Japanese from moving outside the quarantine boundary (68). The combined effect of establishing public health and immigration policies based on race has been to institutionalize and perpetuate racial and class divisions, thereby projecting onto an other all that is believed to be contaminated, so as to conceal the failure and inadequacy of "cleanliness" and "health" in the guise of protecting the purity of American identity. Such a categorization of Asians as a source of pollution and danger carries within it connotations that have resonance well beyond the exclusion era. By the time *A Beautiful Country* premiered in 1998, the Angel Island immigrant screening facility had become one of two registered Asian American national historic landmarks.[33] But what exactly does the play say about identity and the power of discourses of health and medical knowledge to sustain racial understandings of immigrants? And what does the play say about dress as connected to these?

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[31] According to Jennifer Gee, the 1910 White-Slave Traffic Act and the 1917 Immigrant Act served to strengthen anti-Asian immigration into the U.S.: "Screening for sexual immorality also reinforced the class biases of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Gentlemen's Agreement" (99). Undertaking the role of "gendered gatekeeping," the Angel Island immigration station evaluation process "demanded sexual respectability of women of color who were defined by American society as racially prone to immorality" (101, 102).

[32] A Spanish outpost in 1775, Angel Island in San Francisco Bay was used as a United States army base from 1863 to 1946, an immigration station from 1910 to 1940, a place where prisoners of war were confined during World War II, a radar and missile site from 1955 to 1962, and a state park managed by California Department of Parks and Recreation since 1963. Officially designated as a port of entry and detention in 1914, the Immigration Station on Angel Island processed immigrants from Korea, India, Japan, Mexico, the Philippines, China, and Russia. Because of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Chinese immigrants were subject to close scrutiny and were detained for a period ranging from six days to two years during the period 1910 to 1940. The enforcement of a stringent quarantine of immigrants was facilitated by the island which kept newcomers under constant surveillance from the medical gaze of health officials and immigration authorities. Under the U.S. Marine Hospital Service's charge, a federal bacteriology laboratory was set up on Angel Island in 1899 because of the "looming threat of bubonic plague in China, Japan, and Hawaii" (Markel 61).

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[33] The other Asian American historic site is Manzanar internment camp. In 2005, President George Bush approved the Angel Island Immigration Station Restoration and Preservation Act.

The Second Skin:[34] *(Un)dressing the Chinese Immigrant Body at the Immigration Station*

At the Angel Island immigration facility beginning in the 1870s, uniformed officers of both the Immigration Service and Public Health Service fixed immigrants arriving at "medical borders" with their medical gaze, in order to prevent the spread of contagious diseases (Shah 181). Yet the play problematizes the stigmatization of Chinese immigrant labourers as inherent disease carriers by pointing to the congested boat on which they travelled to the U.S., a mode of transport, that weakened their bodies' ability to fight against an outbreak of infectious disease. The play articulates the cramped living conditions of the boat carrying immigrants to America through Chinaman's narrative of his crossing experience.

> Chinaman: Through the porthole of the boat
> this small window
> I see
> turbulent murky mysterious blue
> I see
> it claim limp bodies
> of friends
> family
> dead from epidemic meningitis

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[34] I borrow the title from Marilyn J. Horn's *The Second Skin: An Interdisciplinary Study of Clothing* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968).

The boat reeked their legacies
Waves of grime sweat vomit (194).

On arrival, Chinaman recounts: "A quarantine / A barrack / they put me in / A fence / they separate me from / A building / they confine me to / A cell / from which I can see / A city / named after a saint / San Francisco" (197 – 198).[35]

Yew evokes Angel Island as a historical point of entry for immigrants and as a critique of the history of racialization and immigrant acts that dates back to the period prior to the Chinese Exclusion era (1882 – 1943). The U.S. Congress's passing of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act was a culmination of government efforts to curtail Chinese labourers who were considered to be a threat to the health of the nation. Conceived in 1904 and informed by the terms of the Chinese Exclusion Act and gender ideology, the Angel Island immigration station was an interrogation site at which the screening process involved verifying Chinese immigrants' identities.[36] In order to cleanse the nation of the so-called moral and racial pollution stemming from Chinese prostitutes who had begun to arrive in the mid-nineteenth century, social reformers and anti-Chinese politicians petitioned against their immigration. In 1875, the Page Law was passed to restrict the entry of Asian contract labourers as well as to prohibit the admission of Chinese prostitutes ostensibly in order to curb moral and sexual contagion. Yew's elaboration and juxtaposition of the Chinaman's narrative in 1879 and Visa's narrative in 1998 works to engage with contemporary lived experience to make sense of the larger process of citizenship ideals and immigrant screening.

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[35] Barde and Bobonis conjecture that approximately 300,000 people were detained at Angel Island between 1910 and 1940 (106). As the Angel Island Immigration Station was burnt down in 1940, many of the administrative records were destroyed. Thus the number of people detained in the facility, including the duration of the detention, is "based more on anecdotal than on systematic evidence" (Barde and Bobonis 106).

[36] Besides Chinese immigrants, photographs from archives show that Japanese, Russian, Serbian, Turkish, and Jamaican immigrants were also processed at the station (Daniels).

Back at the immigration station in the last scene, the moment before Visa begins his/her monologue, Yew's directions state: "Stagehands come to Visa with a bucket of water. Visa looks at the two of them and nods. They help him undress. Visa takes his wig and clothing off. He is naked. Visa washes his face and wipes his face with a white towel" (273). How does this scene serve to remember the Angel Island immigration station, the lasting interimplication of nineteenth-century public health discourse and "Asian" bodily identity? This moment raises the question of regulating, containing, and profiling bodies as Visa's washing of his/her face suggests a ritual cleansing, a response to the racially overdetermined surveillance of the racial "other" that recalls a 1891 legislation requiring Chinese and Japanese immigrants to bathe and scrub their bodies with soap on Angel Island (183).[37] Through the performance of undressing, the play suggests that remembering the passage of medical exclusion in conjunction with nineteenth-century racial discourse forms a crucial site in which the terms of citizenship and belonging in the national body are policed and legislated, but can also be challenged. Markel and Stern write that beginning with the Immigration Act of 1891 stipulating the exclusion of persons afflicted with "loathsome or dangerous contagious disease" and insisting that steamship companies sanitize passengers, immigration into the United States was "defined by a medical vocabulary of pathology and health" (1315). Furthermore, medical inspection on Angel Island was determined by class and race prejudice (1322). For example, Asian steerage passengers were mandated by the immigration authorities to bathe and delouse their clothing and belongings. By invoking Chinaman's entry into Angel Island and dramatizing Visa's cleansing as a mandatory ritual of disinfection and inspection of immigrants before entry, the play points to the unspoken medicalized scrutiny underpinning the construction of citizenship laws and makeup of the nation. For the immigration officers, Visa's stripping and cleansing marks the risky prophylaxis that must be removed in order for the racial "other" to be deemed "clean." While Visa's disrobing is intended to remove the "risk" or danger of his/her drag and gender performance, the disabling of the threat of category crisis that the Asian immigrant him/herself poses to the U.S. nation state can be interpreted as a moment of recognition, as Benjamin posits in "Theses on the Philosophy of History": "The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again" (255). This moment of recognition conjoins the images of Chinaman and Visa to illuminate a critical connection between immigration then and now.

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[37] While Public Health Services officers sent all arriving immigrants to bathe and scrutinized their naked bodies for signs of leprosy, hernia, cholera, or bubonic plague, upper-class cabin passengers were exempted from the kind of invasive medical inspection experienced by steerage passengers. Comprising mostly Asian immigrants, steerage passengers were subject to "public examination," whereas upper-class passengers, who consisted of mainly of "U.S. citizens or European visitors," were accorded the privacy of having their medical exam in their own rooms (Shah 184).

Here, the image of nudity not only serves as a coerced self-declaration of "who he is," but also as a historical document attesting to the invasive examination of the Asian American body, as well as the indignities that Asian American citizens endure.

Nevertheless, Visa responds to the screening procedures that embed racial logic in national government and legislative policies with his own assertion of citizenship rights to establish his home in the U.S. Holding the stage alone in the last scene, Miss Visa speaks directly to the audience "in broken and halting English": "My / name / is / Wong Kong Shin / I / come / from / Penang / West Malaysia / No / I / come / from / Los Angeles / California / United States of America" (273 – 274). The play uses Visa's disrobing and cleansing as a means for making a twofold social critique. First, as Richard Dyer puts it, "really white whiteness," which connotes cleanliness and purity, is "unattainable," and he adds that the "most celebrated blondes (Harlow, Monroe, Bardot) were not true blondes, but peroxided to within an inch of their lives" (78). Just as Madonna used clothing to "do" Lana Turner, Marlene Dietrich, and Marilyn Monroe, in a similar manner Visa "does" Madonna, theatricalizing of the gender and race of recognizable film stars.[38] Stripping off the clothes that signify Madonna, Visa draws attention to the constructedness of gender and racial identities, and, at the same time, refuses to privilege the Madonnesque fashion makeover as panacea for the material realities of race.[39] While the "real" Madonna is always so firmly "in charge, that she clearly dominates everyone around her," the notion of Visa in Madonna drag reveals the limits of racial drag (Kellner 287). In short, notions of American ideality and American identity still haunt immigrant Visa, just as the effects of racialization on immigrant histories linger on in Asian America.

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[38] Similar to Audrey Hepburn, scholarly study of Madonna is voluminous. In "Madonna, Fashion, and Image," Douglas Kellner usefully offers insight into "the Madonna phenomenon" by tracing the three distinct phases that mark the shifts in her use of fashion and sexuality to construct her identity (268). In the 1990s, Madonna called herself a "revolutionary" by becoming politically active in giving AIDS/HIV benefits and supporting several causes, such as AIDS research and helping AIDS orphans (294).

Second, Visa's undressed body in transit also returns me to David Eng's insightful account of queer diasporas functioning as sites of resistance, though he cautions that diasporas can work as "unusually conservative sites of nationalism as well" ("Out Here" 207). Eng elucidates that "conservative diasporas" are often organized communities according to heterosexist notions of kinship and filiation (207). In this respect, diasporic communities can reinforce élitist, static, authentic identities in order to exclude, or to bar outsiders from crossing restricted boundaries. While the search for home and the ability to cross borders for queer diasporic subjects is raced, classed, and gendered, Visa asserts that he is "home." Take the slides, one of which indicates the year 1998, in the closing scene of the play in which Visa is at the immigration station: "It was more than a / hundred years ago. / But the question is / still the same" (273). This reference to the past seems to me important, especially in the context of the play's objective to bring back immigrant acts into the field of vision. Visa is greeted with the immigration officer's clinical questions: "Stay or go? / Stay or go?" Visa replies: "I'm staying. / I'm home" (273). Following Visa's response, the immigration officer, whose words are formulaic, hollow, assumes otherwise, even though Visa states clearly he is staying in Los Angeles: "Let me see your return ticket / Ticket / Plane ticket / Yes / that blue folder / No return / I see / You cannot stay / for more than three months (Officer smiles at Visa. He stamps some papers and waves him over.) / Welcome to America / Next" (274 - 275). Refusing to sanitize or romanticize border crossing as liberatory, the play asserts the "fixing" of conservative diasporas and nation states. For queer mobility through the diaspora and across national borders, where institutional apparatuses and identity constructions function to police and regulate migrants, the play offers no narrative resolution, but leads us to rethink in-betweenness and communities of belonging and inclusion both within and outside the nation.

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[39] Referencing Madonna's defence of her explicit imagery in videos, Diana Crane writes that such "emphasis on nudity can be interpreted as an avant-gardist violation of a bourgeois taboo" (137). Nevertheless, I concur with Crane that while female nudity no longer signifies "powerlessness and subordination," the significance of nudity remains "ambiguous" (137).

Visa's allusion to her dress and makeup also points to how his national identity and incorporation into the American body politic is contingent upon his fitting into certain ideals. Meanwhile, he is at home in the theatre: "My foundation / mascara / rouge / My new face / My lip-synch life / My makeover life in America / This theatre / This is my home / My between home / between the port of Penang / and the port of Los Angeles" (258). Yew's deployment of a cross-dressing Asian American queen is a narrative device, but perhaps more importantly, also a theory of addressing the ways in which American history and American writing have never been confined and fitted to its geographical boundaries. Rather, they have been a cross-border interconnection to other people, nations, national histories, and languages. Whether Miss Visa is wearing Levi's 501s or dressing like Madonna, Yew's play dramatizes Visa's ambivalence and feeling of sadness with regard to issues of Americanness and identities within the U.S. Through Miss Visa, the play integrates diverse stories into a larger Asian American memory, one that resonates in the present and lends it the power of critique. It is along these lines that Benjamin's recognition of the power of "a memory" can illuminate Yew's harnessing of the past "as an image which flashes up" in the present, in order to reactivate Asian American consciousness of immigration history as a call for an informed understanding in the service of intercultural coalition in the contemporary moment ("Theses" 255). Such a call for an informed understanding is significant in the 1990s because it speaks to a moment of celebrating heterogeneity within "Asian Americanness," particularly when changes in immigration laws and transnational connection challenge the Asian American identity construct.[40]

Conclusion

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[40] Passage of the 1990 Immigration Act granted highly educated immigrants, high-level professionals, skilled and unskilled workers, and Asian capitalists entry into the U.S. The highly educated track benefited immigrants from Ireland, Indonesia, and Malaysia (Paul Ong and John M. Liu 167 – 168). Engaging Lisa Lowe's idea of Asian American heterogeneities within Asian American discourse, Dana Y. Takagi contends that "our valuation of heterogeneity not be ad hoc and that we seize the opportunity to recognize nonethnic based differences—like homosexuality—as an occasion to critique the tendency toward essentialist currents in ethnic-based narratives and disciplines" (557). In this light, Yew's plays go beyond heterogeneity and attempt to contextualize and grasp the notion of death and loss from AIDS.

In this chapter, I have attempted to establish connections between dress signs and cultural transformations that previously have not been placed in the context of hygiene and racialization discourses. In order to begin to get a grasp on the language of dress, I have taken as my starting point a sartorial abstraction that can help position both of Yew's plays as narrative tools that are used to respond to and intervene into particular historical moments. Examining the anti-Chinese movement in California in the 1870s, Robert Lee argues that the Chinese "body"—dress, food, language, and labour—was deemed incapable of assimilation. In his discussion of the role of American popular culture in changing the "Asian body into an American body" in *Flower Drum Song* (1960), Lee highlights two characters: Linda Low's "All-American girl" image is signified by "her clothes, perfume, jewellery, and cars"; and Mei Li's American status is aided by television, which taught her language and values (178). Lee's discussion of the workings of material signs and American identity in nineteenth- and twentieth-century popular culture offers an important reminder that dress is a narrative sign, one that I argue Yew's *A Language of Their Own* and *A Beautiful Country* use to tell a broader history of immigration and to broach the question of becoming a "real" American.

In *A Language of Their Own*, Yew complicates the paradigm of community building by foregrounding the displacements, the internalization of hierarchical difference, and the psychosocial ambivalences of his Asian American characters. In particular, the character Ming watches *My Fair Lady* multiple times and channels his desire to prove himself worthy of ideal citizenship through

Audrey Hepburn. While both Oscar's and Ming's language proficiency might be construed as success stories, I have argued that the play delimits this optimistic reading by underscoring the contradictions within the narratives of linguistic progression. Ultimately, the play calls for a critical consciousness of the way in which the ideology of English language is integral to perpetuating ethnic stereotypes and maintaining structural inequalities among Asian American characters. At the same time, the play cautions against prejudices and complicity with the perpetuation of ethnic, class, geographic, and language stereotypes amongst Asian Americans. Evidently, the process of linguistic makeover and self-fashioning is more vexed and messy for the characters than it initially appears. Instead of subscribing to a utopian vision of community based on heterogeneity, Yew depicts the characters' conflictual, continual negotiation between national identity and a reconfiguration of Asian American identity. Although the play focuses on the affective complexity of the relationships between Oscar, Ming, Robert, and Daniel, it situates these relationships within a wider context of debates over immigration, language, and citizenship. Most importantly, the play enjoins us to recognize the necessity for broadening the notion of a legitimate language and for interrogating the turning of language proficiency into a tool of discrimination and exclusion both within the nation and within Asian American communities themselves.

Extending Eng's and Han's theory of depathologizing melancholia, I have suggested that Ming's racial melancholia serves as a structure of feeling, an actively felt material, collective identity, that is part of a larger process of communal mourning and remembering Asian American history. In José Esteban Muñoz's terms, understanding melancholia as a "structure of feeling" is crucial to "our process of dealing with all the catastrophes that occur in the lives of people of color, lesbians, and gay men" (74).[41] Cheng's notion of mourning or grief as grieving and grievance is also useful here: "When it comes to racial mourning about and for the self, melancholia (the hanging-on to a self synecdochized as a 'pestilential arm') provides the form of grievance necessary for grieving—and communal assimilation of that melancholia the perverse embodiment of progress and moving on" (100). While the play dismantles notions of homogeneity and unity that form the basis of community, it offers the potential of coalitional bonds and communities of identification under conditions of communal mourning and loss.

In the wake of debates and the media's scare-mongering attitude to the influx of immigrants in the 1990s, *A Beautiful Country* had a particularly important role alongside community-based theatre in seriously addressing difficult issues of race, citizenship, and the national community at the time. This attention serves to open the question as to how political discourse renders the other racially hypervisible. In *A Beautiful Country*, Yew brings together official, political history and Asian American emotional life experiences and narratives to create an archive of affective histories. Hosting this multimedia production is drag queen Miss Visa, who uses dress to transgress established boundaries and identities, to make his own fashion and political statements, and to mediate a series of stories and testimonies. Writing under the conditions of changing demographics, current histories, and the remaking of Asian American subjectivity, Yew uses the character of a drag queen to open up larger issues of dress and hygiene implicated in border crossing and the ongoing configuration of American national identity. As critiques of the limits of the apparatus of American immigration and naturalization laws and policies, Yew's plays show that race underwrites English language legislation, and the rights of citizenship. "Immigrant acts," Lowe argues, "names the *agency* of Asian immigrants and Asian Americans: the *acts* of labor, resistance, memory, and survival, as well as the politicized cultural work that emerges from dislocation and disidentification" (9; original emphasis). As the title of *A Beautiful Country* itself already promises, the play uses the Chinese term for the U.S., "mei guo," and translates it into English—a beautiful country—as an act of interrogating America as a beautiful country, and as an act of expanding the construction of the American nation as linguistically and racially diverse. Besides telling the stories of model-minority Asian Americans, the plays demonstrate that other stories and histories need to be told. History, according to Benjamin, "is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty, but time filled by the presence of the now" (261). *A Beautiful Country* illustrates a premise of Benjamin's materialist history: it serves to "blast open the continuum of history" and show that the present is suffused with stories and memories of the past (262).

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[41] Focusing on the communal mourning scene in *Looking for Langston*, Muño characterizes mourning as a "whole," or "as a contingent and temporary collection of fragments that is experiencing a loss of its parts" (73).

Closing Thoughts

Exploring several theoretical approaches taken to address fashion literature, Joanne Entwistle begins by posing these supposedly simplistic questions: "why do we wear clothes?" and "why do we adorn?" (57). In *The Classic Ten*, Nancy MacDonell Smith writes: "Every item of clothing has a narrative. Some of their narratives carry greater weight, have a deeper meaning, and a more lasting influence than others" (xiii). Taking Smith's "story" of clothes and Roland Barthes' idea of "written clothing" as starting points, I have explored the question of how, exactly, dress mediates narratives of subjectivity and their reconstitution, as well as how dress might intervene in the particularities of American national identity. In "Fashion and the Social Sciences," Barthes writes that clothing is "a kind of grammar," "an act of signification and therefore a profoundly social act" (96, 97). I adapt Barthes' concept of clothing to suggest that dress in Asian American literature becomes a language to articulate what Elaine H. Kim would call "buried histories" (238). These "buried histories," Kim argues, include Americans of colour working together to "fight economic and social injustice" as well as "many interracial conflicts" (238). This study takes seriously Kim's emphasis on "buried histories" by analyzing dress in Asian American writings published in the 1990s.

In my focus on Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*, Mavis Hara's "Carnival Queen," and Chay Yew's *A Language of Their Own* and *A Beautiful Country*, I have suggested that the U.S., a powerful nation offering the promise of democracy and the American Dream via American national identity, a signifier of freedom and choice articulated through dress practices and bodily discipline, is thrown into question. By setting their narratives in the Philippines and Hawaii respectively, Hagedorn and Hara extend outward and beyond the geographical limits of mainland America, connecting the history and effects of U.S. imperialism to that promise of citizenship and configurations of Asian American subjectivity. While Yew's plays are set in the U.S., they include languages other than English as a linguistic force that bears witness to the diasporic crossings of national borders. In Yew's writings, the American landscape is a site of diversified communities with fictional and non-fictional stories that are historically linked across continents. For Hagedorn's and Yew's texts, Asian American literature consists of competing languages and vernaculars, and histories, all criss-crossing and energizing the local landscape. I have read dress and clothing in these texts to unpack how race, immigration legislation and nationality, and language determine the availability of U.S. citizenship and the national imaginings of the nation.

In her survey of the 1980s fashion scene, Melissa Richards notes that television shows and lifestyle magazines present fashion narratives in which "you read the nature of the individual by the clothes and accessories" they wear (158). To be successful, Richards writes, the fashion media advised that "all you had to do was dress right and think positive" (158). The fashionable, high-society characters of Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* provide a relevant and provocative illustration of Richards' point. Several of her characters are drawn to and cognizant of dressing the part, of performing cultural and national citizenship in

1980s Philippines, yet it is clear that the 'lessons' of the Marcos era have continuing relevance in the 1990s, when Hagedorn wrote and published her novel. I set out to critically examine the deployment of dress as a technology of the official narrative and resistances to it in Hagedorn's, Hara's, and Yew's writings. As I have demonstrated in my study, Asian American texts give expression to the installation of dress habits and bodily régimen as part of a disciplinary regime concerned with bringing Asian American subjects' dress and social practices into conformity with dominant norms of moral and physical cleanliness, and, by extension, the model minority image.

Interrogating constructions of identity is a larger, unfinished project in Asian American literary criticism. Much lively, ongoing debate and difficult questions have driven the consideration of subject formation in the field of Asian American studies. Critics have taken to task the term "Asian American" as homogenizing. In charting a conceptual framework for Filipino American studies, Helen C. Toribio contends that the field has "historically had an uneasy relationship with Asian American studies, as a result of its more marginal existence relative to the fields of Chinese American and Japanese American studies which have dominated Asian American studies" (167). As Toribo points out, there are ethnic and historical constituents that mark the field of Filipino American studies and those of Chinese American and Japanese American studies as disparate fields. Toribio calls for "an approach that examines the terms Filipino/Filipino American, Asian/Asian American," and emphasizes the need to strenuously reexamine the production of identities (167). While the pan-Asian identity or pan-Asian coalition building is a response to anti-Asian violence and "mistaken identity," the multiplicity of divisions and interests within "the" Asian American community is a significant issue.[1] By adopting a nuanced reading of Asian American literature, I suggest that it is possible to recognize the complexities at work in shifting identities based on particular contexts, such as generation, social, spatial, and time contexts. Viet Thanh Nguyen, in his introductory chapter to *Race and Resistance* entitled "A Crisis of Representation," states that he and other Asian American intellectuals of Filipino and South Asian descent are concerned about Asian America's theory, practice, and limits. Specifically, Nguyen points out that Asian American scholarship has been "shaped by the historical domination of intellectuals who come primarily, although not exclusively, from Japanese and Chinese American backgrounds" (11). Even so, I suggest that Japanese and Chinese American communities themselves are not monolithic because of internal heterogeneity and diverse interests within ethnic groups. The term "Asian American" signifies more than racial and ethnic identity. Stephen H. Sumida and Sau-ling Cynthia Wong call critical attention to the ambivalent and contradictory aspects of the subject position of Asian American as a designation of change in their *Resource Guide*. Mindful of the ways in which "identity" continues to be "ethnically specific," Sumida and Wong offer an example: "the widely used term *Chinese American*, accepted in the United States as 'natural,' may prove unstable: as Taiwanese identity gains ground in the island state, Taiwanese Americans are differentiating themselves from Chinese Americans" (7). In this sense, the category of Asian American identity is contingent and transitional, so that Asian Americans might mobilize several identities that include national identity (American), pan-Asian identity (Asian American), ethnic identity (Chinese American), and/or country-of-origin identity (Taiwanese American). To come back to Nguyen's critique, as well as to questions of theory and practice, these are precisely some of the issues I have tried to explore in reading and writing about Asian American literature. As Asian American studies is a continuously evolving field, it has expanded its boundaries and lines of scholarly inquiry for specific ethnic groups.

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[1] In her 1992 book on pan-Asian identity politics, Yen Le Espiritu describes the ways in which several Asian ethnic groups in cities such as Chicago and Los Angeles formed coalitions to protect their ethnic and common interests. See chapter four, *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1992).

At the beginning of my study, I wondered if it were time for the image of Asian Americans to move beyond the Yellow Peril. I now wonder if this is possible yet. It is precisely by attending to the vexed representational challenges posed by the category "Asian American," and by critically focusing on body and dress and the ways in which fashion and film icons, celebrity designers, and beauty pageants reinscribe identity, that I have developed my analysis of written clothing in Asian American literature as a narrative tool, opening up further the connection between identity and issues of belonging, rights and legitimacy, community, and affective experience. It strikes me as hardly coincidental, then, that, as Sucheng Chan notes, much scholarship on the exclusion era and its archive was published in the late 1990s and the early 2000s (x). The study of factors governing the construction and expression of identity is worth pursuing in the present moment, particularly when the project illuminates a range of Asian American experiences and identities. In her review of Asian American literary studies in the late 1990s, King-Kok Cheung took on the question of class and the failure of Asian American literary criticism to grapple with issues of global capitalism. For Cheung, "Asians and Asian Americans are seen as occupying not just exploited but exploiting positions" (14). In 2003, David Leiwei Li argued, echoing Cheung, that, together with race, the "figure of class must be equally foregrounded to reveal the discrepancy within an Asian Pacific diaspora and the North and South divide" (622). Both Cheung and Li are right to point out the class blindness of Asian American literary criticism, a blindness that continues in many respects. On this front, I suggest it is productive to examine two key elements of material practices. First, they illuminate material reality, immigration history, mobility, expectations of race, gender, class, sexuality, and nationality, American national identity, and possibilities of bridging across communities. Second, they highlight the contradictions that traverse Asian American subjectivities in literature. Identity and identity-based movements are connected to economic, social, and political concerns as well as the dynamics of everyday life in the U.S. and the world.

Does Dress Matter?: National Identity in the Time of SARS and "Yellow HANs"

In writing this study, I was reminded of the 2003 severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak in Asia and in Toronto, Canada, which evoked the late-nineteenth century U.S. health crisis throughout the peak period of immigration. With SARS classified as a global threat by the World Health Organization, it was not surprising that when I flew home in the summer of that year, the airplane was quite empty. On arrival at the Singapore airport, I walked past an infrared fever screening system manned by two officials. The experience was surreal because what was once a hustle and bustle site of transit had become a silent, solemn space with few people. In August, when I returned to Canada and upon arrival at the very busy Vancouver International Airport, the spectre of SARS still hung heavy and a battery of vigilant personnel was on hand to screen international passengers arriving from high-risk countries. Before I could pass through the international border entry points, I had first to respond to questions listed on "yellow cards," Health Alert Notices (HANs), and submit mine to the officers. Do appearance and (racial) fashioning amount to any kind of mitigation of screening? Does dress function as a prophylactic device against the penetrating gaze of immigration and health authorities? If class and style could at one time, as Yew's *A Beautiful Country* reminds us, render Asians more acceptable immigrants, that possibility was foreclosed because skin registered homogenously as Asian and therefore contagious. Sartorial sophistication no longer counted at a moment when the Yellow Peril resurfaced in the form of contagion. The 2003 SARS epidemic was reminiscent of the spectre of disease and abjectness of the Chinese population of San Francisco by the 1880s.[2] In 1885, after some twenty years of extensive surveillance and investigation, a report accompanied by a map of San Francisco's Chinatown was produced to crystallize the conflation of racial identity and the threat of infection and contamination. At the time, Chinese immigrants were scrutinized for contagious diseases and their bodies subject to the medical experts' clinical gaze. Regarded as unsanitary and unhealthy, Chinese immigrants were pathologized as disease carriers, a stigmatizing discourse that was reactivated over a century later during the SARS epidemic. I relate the colour of the "yellow cards" issued at arrival sites in the Vancouver airport to public health technologies and layers of medical discourse embedded in the materiality of the Asian body as Yellow Peril, an embodiment of danger and horror crystallized in 2003.

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[2] For a useful discussion of disease as a metaphor for Asian American studies, see Russell C. Leong's discussion of disease as a metaphor in "Chaos, SARS,

Discussing the re-circulation of late-nineteenth-century stigmatizing risk discourses during the SARS epidemic in New York's Chinatown, Laura Eichelberger points out that the public was "infected with an epidemic of fear, not of disease" (1285). Eichelberger highlights how blame discourses were directed at Chinese immigrants in New York's Chinatown during the SARS epidemic and how these "othering" discourses were important to the "maintenance of a healthy identity" (1285). Recounting the medical panic following Hawaii's bubonic outbreak in 1899, Eichelberger writes that the San Francisco Board of Health shut down Chinatown businesses and quarantined Chinese residents during the 1900 bubonic plague epidemic. In this regard, I read material practices and embodiment in Asian American literature as a form of timely politicized

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Yellow Peril: Virulent Metaphors for the Asian American Experience?" *Amerasia Journal* 29.1 (2003): v – viii.

remembering, yet it is Asian American writers' interest in interracial and cross-racial relations and affiliations that offers us the most crucial insight for our present moment. The SARS epidemic showed us that while the political and material conditions of Asian Americans have undergone changes over the years, the rendering of Asian American identities has not. The particular identification of Chinese immigrants as radiating contagion during the SARS epidemic attests to the persistent characterization of race or nationality in terms of excess, of threat to nation and national "health."

How, I wonder, might Asian American studies not only seek to open up further epistemological and theoretical possibilities, but also provide opportunities for students, scholars, and communities to articulate their experiences and stories about belonging and moments of not-belonging, such as we saw with the SARS epidemic. As Elaine Kim writes: "Most studies about American 'race relations' have been about a particular racialized group's relationship to whiteness or white society. We need to understand communities of color not only in relation to whites but also to each other" (239). In some respects, SARS was all about a form of yellow versus white relation. Yet such a moment also raises the question of what is the relation of Asian American communities is to each other as well as to the U.S. and to the rest of the world. I suggest that Asian American literature opens the door to grappling with the complexity of kinship and affiliative ties, the criss-crossing lives and overlapping narratives of ethnic groups, and the tangled, messy day-to-day coexistence of Americans, Asian Americans, and Asians. For me, returning to the question of Asian American identity, and interrogating the category of "Asian American," would also mean thinking through what I have read and written, about Chinese Americans in the late nineteenth century and today, thinking about the relationship between the past and the present, considering the early Asian American scholarship and the recent critiques and urgent concerns, and then engaging with Asian American literature and addressing the issues in ways that are meaningful and sensitive to contemporary Asian America. No matter how diverse Asian American communities, experiences, and histories may be, I suggest that by unfolding a multitude of identities, zones of contestation, and points of view, the field becomes a site of interventionist imagining of a livable future. The field of Asian American studies can be considered to be a crossroads, whereby struggles over meanings of representation and identity, as well as the Asian American body and its "fitness," continue.

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